

HOWARD BATMAN

An Interview Conducted by

William Pickett

August 15, 1981

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"WORKS OF REFERENCE"

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DATE

NARRATOR DATA SHEET

Name of narrator: Howard Batman

Address: 25 Hamilton Drive, T.H. 47803 Phone: Office: 232-9571

Birthdate: 74 years Birthplace: Marengo

Length of residence in Terre Haute: _____

Education: Bachelor's Indiana University

Jurisprudence Doctorate, Indiana University

Occupational history: Attorney for Lincoln National Insurance
Company. Public Relations Officer United States Navy, WW II.
Practicing attorney and partner of Terre Haute law firm
since 1946.

Special interests, activities, etc. History. Politics in Indiana.
For additional information, see Terre Haute and Her People of
Progress, 1970, "Howard Taylor Batman," 38,242. (Vigo County
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Interviewing sessions:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Interviewer</u>
08/15/81		Mr. Batman's residence	William B. Pickett

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HOWARD BATMAN

Tape 1

August 15, 1981

At residence of Mr. Batman--25 Hamilton Drive, Terre Haute, IN

INTERVIEWER: William B. Pickett

TRANSCRIBER: Kathleen M. Skelly

For: Vigo County Oral History Program

WBP: This is August 15, 1981. I'm Bill Pickett and I'm talking today with Howard Batman in his house on Hamilton Drive in Terre Haute, Indiana -- 25 Hamilton Road, I guess it is, Terre Haute, Indiana.

The biographical data I have from you came first from the listing in the Indiana Legal Directory on page 178, City of Terre Haute. Of course, there it indicates that you served as a state Representative in the Indiana General Assembly from 1939 to 1941. At that time, you were living in Terre Haute, were you not?

BATMAN: Oh, yes.

WBP: So, you've been involved in Democratic politics for quite a few years.

BATMAN: Right.

WBP: But in addition to these items I found that you were also . . . you had served as vice president of the Indiana State Chamber of Commerce. Have you served in any other official capacity with the State Chamber of Commerce?

BATMAN: Well, I was state president of the Junior Chamber of Commerce and . . .

WBP: During what years was this?

BATMAN: That was in overlapping year (they elect in the middle of the year) of 1941-'42.

WBP: What years were you vice president of the State Chamber of Commerce?

BATMAN: Now, I'd have to get you the dates on that.

WBP: All right.

BATMAN: In addition to . . . I'll throw these things in for the sake of accuracy.

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BATMAN: After I served in the 1941 session of the General Assembly, Governor Henry F. Schricker appointed me as public counsellor to the Public Service Commission of Indiana. That's a job that has to do with representing the public in rate matters before the regulatory bodies, the Public Service Commission. And you appear on behalf of the public investigating rate cases -- such as are going on now. The job calls for you to examine the records of the public utilities and check with accountants, lawyers, engineers for the company and prepare a case in regard to whether the rates are justified or not and question various costs and charges and so forth.

WBP: But you're acting in behalf of the public?

BATMAN: Yes, acting in behalf of the public. Ordinarily, there's no one who represents the public as such in those matters. It's a job which now would be called, I suppose, sort of a consumers' advocate or that type of thing. And I held that job until . . . well, the draft board was breathing a little hard on my neck, and in a burst of patriotism I decided (laughs) to resign and join the Navy. So, I went in the service and then when the war World War II was over, I never ran for office again.

WBP: I see.

What were you in the Navy?

BATMAN: Lieutenant.

WBP: Lieutenant. On what kind of vessel?

BATMAN: Well, my sea duty consisted of a very limited type of thing. I was never in combat. I never heard a shot fired in anger. My (commences to laugh) principal occupation turned out to be a speech writer for the admiral of Ninth Naval District, Admiral Carpenter. I was . . .

WBP: Where is the Ninth Naval District?

BATMAN: Chicago. It embraces the major states around here.

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BATMAN: Admiral Carpenter, I was on his staff. And that was my principal avocation. I always said that my service consisted of serving on an LMD -- a large mahogany desk.

WBP: Ha, ha.

BATMAN: . . . and that's about the extent of my wartime activities.

I was on the /U.S.S./ Columbus, heavy cruiser, for a few months, but we were never in combat.

WBP: That sounds considerably more comfortable than a minesweeper upon which I served (laughs) although not during wartime.

You were United States Commissioner from 1960 to '62?

BATMAN: That's right.

WBP: What is that?

BATMAN: The United States Commissioner is an officer of the federal court. People who are arrested on federal charges are frequently brought before the Commissioner for interrogation prior to action by the grand jury. The matter of bail and bond is set, and a report is made to the judge of the district concerning the arrest or indictment or whatever it might be. It's a . . .

WBP: I see.

BATMAN: . . . sort of an honorary job, really.

WBP: All right.

And let's see . . . you also . . . at one point you introduced Senator John F. Kennedy at his local visit to Terre Haute in the 1960 campaign for President.

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: How did that happen?

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BATMAN: Well, Kennedy came to Indiana. It was known that the purpose for which he was here was to file his proper documents in the Secretary of State's office and announce his candidacy for President. I don't know whether Kennedy had been to other states and made the announcement or not. But he came to Indiana with the avowed intention of announcing that he was a candidate for the nomination of presidency. And he had been engaged to speak in Terre Haute by the Terre Haute Lecture . . . Terre Haute Lecture Club, is that the name of it?

WBP: I don't know.

BATMAN: I'm not sure it exists any longer.

WBP: Well, it . . . I don't know that it exists now.

BATMAN: I'm sure it doesn't. We haven't heard anything about it. But we had this very fine organization, and we brought in a lot of people of national and international stature who would come to Terre Haute. And we had a series of three or four lectures during the year. He had been selected a year or two before he was a United States Senator. But he was selected only because he was a bright young man from the U.S. Senate and very articulate. I suppose his name had been bandied about as a possible candidate, but when he was invited to address the Lecture Club, he was not at all a candidate. So at the time he arrived for the lecture, he was a very prominent person being mentioned all over the country as a possible nominee.

So, when he came here, there were a lot of reporters came from all over. They followed him throughout the State. I don't know where else he went. But he came here for the purpose of making that lecture. Ordinarily they held the meetings at the Mayflower Room in the Terre Haute House. Well, the demand for the tickets to hear Kennedy was so great that they moved the meeting up to Indiana State University, to the auditorium. And I don't know how it happened, but anyway the television . . . the radio stations -- television really hadn't come into its own very well in these parts -- but they asked if I would interview Kennedy on the air while he was here. And I, of course, agreed to and that's how it happened. The radio stations combined with

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BATMAN: their people together. And Kennedy and I occupied the podium for the purpose of this interview. It was an interesting experience.

WBP: Is that interview in the news . . . the papers at the time?

BATMAN: Mmmm. I think so. I'm sure it would be. I don't remember specifically about it.

WBP: Do you have any memories of the interview, how well it was received . . .

BATMAN: Oh, yes! I remember it very well.

WBP: . . . how big a crowd and . . .

BATMAN: Oh, the place was packed and he did an excellent job. I mean, he was . . . as he always did on a platform. He was an excellent speaker. I enjoyed being with him the short time I was there. Then I went out to the convention in Los Angeles and met Kennedy and his brother there and had quite a session with them because they were then going around lobbying the delegations. And I was with the Indiana group. I was not a delegate to the convention but . . . I guess WTHI asked me to go out. Yes, they asked me to go out. And Joe Higgins, the manager of the station, went. And I interviewed Kennedy out there and his brother, Robert. And got to know them on that basis, if you can get to know a person in an hour (laughs) or so. But it was an interesting experience, and Kennedy was unquestionably a dynamic, energetic person.

WBP: You remained in Democratic politics.

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: What was your role in local Democratic politics from the time . . . well, after you were state representative to the present, what has been your role?

BATMAN: Oh, I don't think I had any particular role. Once you've been exposed to politics at any level, I think it's the sort of thing that . . . the parallel is hardly accurate in modern times, but

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BATMAN: they used to say, "The firehorse that's been to the fire can't resist (commences to laugh) when the bell rings." Most people don't know what that means today because they can't recall horse-drawn, fire-fighting vehicles. But it's the sort of thing you continue to be interested in. I suppose . . .

WBP: It gets in your blood?

BATMAN: Yeah, I think you might say that. At least you continue an interest in it. I love statistics. And I like to study the results of elections, and I never had anyplace in the party as such. I mean I was never a county chairman or district chairman or anything like that. But I was just always fascinated by it and it's a great sport.

WBP: Why haven't you been a county chairman or a . . .

BATMAN: Well, when I got out of the Navy, I was approached by party leaders here to run for mayor. That was the first campaign and it was the first campaign that Tucker entered, Ralph Tucker. And I talked it over and he said, "Well, I'm going to run and I understand you're going to run. And we'll see what we can do in the primaries."

WBP: This was the election of 1948? 'Forty-seven or so?

BATMAN: Well, whenever Tucker made his first race. I would say that's about it. I was back from the Navy. I'd have to check the exact year, but it was the first mayoralty campaign after I returned from the service.

And I told him at that time, I said, "I haven't made up my mind whether to pursue a political career as such or whether to get back to work." Leonard Marshall was the senior partner. I talked it over with him. And by that time, I had two children. The pay at that time in the General Assembly was \$10 a day, so you got \$600 for serving in the General Assembly. And if you spread it over two years, you got \$300 a year. Obviously, it was not a very lucrative job, so I decided that you had to choose one of two ways. Either you had to be in politics or you had to be in your profession or whatever you were going to do for a living.

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BATMAN: And that was an era, it seemed to me, that a great distinction developed in politics. You either had to be a rich man or you had to be supported and go around asking for donations and contributions from wealthy people or you couldn't be a substantial candidate. Now, prior to that time people who were in congress went to Washington for a couple of months; and then they came back and went to work at their profession, practicing law or whatever it might be. The era was developing in which when you were elected to congress, you went down for the session, you were there all year -- the way it is now. So, I concluded that I certainly did not have the means to be independent in politics. I didn't like the idea of actually going around putting the arm on my friends that had money, (chuckles) to run for public office. I think there was . . . I think that was a transitional stage. Radio was here; television was coming along; enormous budgets began to develop. So I thought, "Well, I've had my political career, I'll go to work." And I really think that's . . . that's what did it.

WBP: O.K.

Would you characterize Terre Haute during this period from 1945 to the present as a Democratic or a Republican city?

BATMAN: Oh, it was Democratic. It was Democratic in the sense that it was . . . the city and the county were carried . . . almost carried into the Democratic column. Now, the city was . . . would change back and forth once in a while, but the county seemed to remain almost solidly Democratic. There was an interruption of one term in there in which Vern McMillan, Republican, was elected mayor. Vern was proprietor of the McMillan . . . founded the McMillan sporting goods store. He was a Republican, very outstanding citizen. And he wanted to be mayor for one term and said he would only be mayor one term. And he kept his word and I think was one of the outstanding mayors that we ever had here. He did a magnificent job as mayor.

WBP: How would you characterize the quality of politics . . . political life in Terre Haute and Vigo County over the years?

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BATMAN: Oh, I think . . . I think it would be not greatly different from other cities of this size. The era of . . . the corrupt era of Donn Roberts and those had gone by. I don't think there was any . . . oh, a little cheating here and there by both parties as there always is, but it's very difficult to get away with it nowadays. I mean the election machinery is pretty airtight. People are better educated, and there's a lot of difference. In that whole era that would cover my political career -- you might say my adult life -- politics was a comparatively clean operation. I don't think there's much skullduggery went on. Overemphasized I'm sure.

WBP: O.K.

Why would you say that Terre Haute . . . that Vigo County were overwhelmingly Democratic for so many years?

BATMAN: Well, I think you go back to the ethnic background. We generally . . . I think it's a common feeling that we had -- at least in that era -- that the Democratic party represented, if there is such a thing, the working class or the blue-collar and the hard-hats of the era. The labor movement was largely sponsored in the Democratic party I think from the days of William Jennings Bryan. It was thought of as being the party of the working or middle class; and the Republican party was pinned with the label of the aristocracy, which of course isn't true at all. But that was characteristic of the cartoons of the time. The Democrats were the poor, downtrodden, lunch bucket-carrying people. And the Republicans were riding in the carriages and the limousines. And I think that was played up. That was a part of the ploy. And characters such as Eugene V. Debs, who was a socialist, his leanings, of course, were generally towards the Democratic party. And it can be said, I think, that the labor movement was largely Democratic although some prominent labor leaders, among them John L. Lewis was a Republican and regularly supported the Republican party. At least that's what we understand now. But it was characterized as a sort of class distinction, and it was fostered by the Democratic party.

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WBP: Certainly, with the New Deal, particularly.

BATMAN: Yes. Particularly with the New Deal. It was for the down-trodden, working people.

WBP: And so basically you're saying that Terre Haute was then and still is to a large degree a working-class city?

BATMAN: I think so. I've heard stories as to how many breweries that we had in Terre Haute at one time. There was a great number of breweries here. And the Democratic party also was labeled -- perhaps with some justification -- as the "wet" party.

WBP: Certainly.

BATMAN: And Franklin D. Roosevelt, of course, announced that if elected, he would repeal the Volstead Act and that liquor would be legal. So I suppose the label has . . . there's some justification in saying that.

WBP: You also mentioned ethnic. What were the dominant ethnic groups in Terre Haute?

BATMAN: Well, I don't know that you could say that there was a dominant group, but we had a great many Irish here. And the Irish, of course, were traditionally Democratic as a result of . . . well, you have to go back into the 19th century to see why it happened that way. But it developed originally in New York and the Democratic party was labeled as a party for the immigrants that came into this country. Tammany Hall in New York was characterized by the political people in New York who grabbed the immigrants as they came in and lured them into the Democratic party. And that was characteristic throughout this part of the country.

There were a lot of German people in Terre Haute. The Scots, Scottish people who came in were largely coal people. And we had, of course, many coal mines at that time and many, many people engaged in the coal industry. And I don't suppose you could say that . . . at least I can't say what percentage of the people were Irish and were German, but there

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BATMAN: was a sprinkling. Some of our very finest families, of course, came from those people who migrated to this country and were engaged in the coal business and other activities.

WBP: O.K.

Do you have any sense from your studying of local history over the years of when the Irish arrived?

BATMAN: No. I couldn't say. I'm sure there are people who could establish that for you.

WBP: Or the Germans?

BATMAN: No, I don't know. Of course, Terre Haute was a boom town in the early 20th century -- growing fast, prosperous. There was a period in Terre Haute history long before I came to Terre Haute in the early '30s in which . . . I've seen the buttons that people were wearing at that time that read: "Soon a hundred thousand" -- which meant the slogan was that Terre Haute would soon have a hundred thousand people. Well, it's never got there (laughs) yet!

WBP: Well, the county did. The county went over, I think, as . . . maybe as early as 1920.

BATMAN: I think it was in the '20s that that . . . those were the boom years.

WBP: I wonder if the Irish came with the canal? I wonder if the Irish were . . .

BATMAN: We traditionally hear of the Irish who built the railroads. And the railroads, of course, followed the canal very quickly.

WBP: That's right.

BATMAN: So, I think . . .

WBP: They might have come for both reasons.

BATMAN: That's right. I think that's right.

WBP: So you know of other ethnic groups -- East Europeans, South Europeans . . .

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BATMAN: I don't know.

WBP: You weren't too aware of those?

BATMAN: No.

WBP: So when you think of ethnic, you're mainly thinking of Irish and German.

BATMAN: I think that would cover it, yes. There were some . . . they called them "Johnnie Bull's" who came at that time -- Welshmen and people who worked The coal mines lured a lot of people who had worked in the mines in Britain. And there were a lot of those, particularly over around West Terre Haute and Sanford and little coal-mining communities around here. There were lots of British people, Welsh, and, of course, the Irish.

WBP: When you think of . . . you've brought up a lot of topics I want to pursue. When you think of coal-mining communities, what names come to your mind first in Vigo County?

BATMAN: Talleys, Templetons, Bledsoe, Kolsem -- k-o-l-s-e-m, Ferguson, Shirkie.

WBP: These are coal-mining families?

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: These are the mine owners and operators?

BATMAN: They were the original coal miners. All of those people were coal miners.

WBP: They were miners themselves?

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: I see.

BATMAN: Yes. I don't . . . now, I can't say that's true of all of those families, but I know it is true of Templeton family and I think all of the others They did not come in and start buying coal then. They were pick-and-shovel coal miners.

WBP: Hmpf.

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BATMAN: Smiths, which Henry /P./ Smith is still living and his father was a pioneer coal operator. Henry worked in the coal mines.

WBP: O.K. Those names, you named them in a certain order. Is that as they just came to mind or was . . . which were probably the biggest or most prosperous coal mine owners ultimately?

BATMAN: Well, that would be hard to say, but certainly the Bledsoes and the Templetons.

WBP: Templeton had mining interests outside Vigo County, I think mainly.

BATMAN: Oh, yes, they . . .

WBP: But they lived here.

BATMAN: Yes, they lived here. Well, I think perhaps you could get better information on that from John Templeton. But I believe they originally settled in Sullivan County, because their principal mining . . . mines were in Sullivan County. But they spread all through here -- Vermillion County, Sullivan County /Green County/. Then, of course, as these men became successful and bought interest in coal lands, why they expanded their operations. And the second generation were coal operators. By this time they owned coal properties.

WBP: Sure.

BATMAN: But they, as far as I know, all of them started out pick-and-shovel and mule drivers in the coal mines.

WBP: O.K. Now, are these names that you . . . are these men you knew in your law practice?

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: O.K.

BATMAN: I mean, nearly everybody knew them in this community. I mean they were prominent people and . . .

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WBP: Would you say they were the most prominent people in this community?

BATMAN: No, not the most prominent people in the community. At that time, Terre Haute was developing into quite a center for wholesale grocers, for example.

WBP: Now, are you talking about . . . what decade?

BATMAN: Well, the decade which represented the period in which the Hulmans came -- the 1845s and '50s when they began to open up businesses here. And there was Reiman, R-e-i-m-a-n, who was in the building supply business and whose company still bears his name in the community. And the Mayer family, M-a-y-e-r, at one time one of the Mayers was a partner, or at least had an interest in the Hulman business. The Mayers later had the Terre Haute Brewing Company. And . . .

WBP: One of the largest in the world, maybe? Terre Haute Brewing Company? It's a beer brewing company, right?

BATMAN: I . . . yes. I wouldn't know as to size compared to others but it was a very prominent brewery. At one time there were several breweries in Terre Haute. And now, as we know, there isn't a one.

And there were distilleries here. I don't know how many or . . . one of the last ones to go, of course, was the . . . I've forgotten the name of it, but they disappeared from the picture in bankruptcy in the '30s, maybe the '40s.

WBP: Prohibition was a blow to them, I suppose.

BATMAN: Oh, Prohibition must have laid this town low. I've heard the number of saloons (laughs) that existed between the Wabash River and 13th Street. And if those figures are true, every other building was a saloon.

WBP: Yes. Yes.

So you're saying basically that wholesale groceries and distilling and coal mining, those three might have been . . .

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BATMAN: And the railroad shops.

WBP: And the railroad shops. All right.

Can you name individuals, people, families
who were involved in railroading?

BATMAN: No, I couldn't. I . . .

WBP: I haven't come across too many of those people.

BATMAN: I think . . . I think by that time in that
era there were the, you know, the big railroads --
the Pennsylvania, the B & O [Baltimore and Ohio],
and . . .

WBP: And then those people lived elsewhere?

BATMAN: Oh, yes.

WBP: [In] larger cities.

BATMAN: Yes. I think that the age of the big rails
came in and that was all eastern capital or maybe
Cincinnati and places like that. But we were just
. . . the railroad shops here were for the maintenance
of cars and . . .

WBP: Would you say that Terre Haute was the center . . .
the social center of coal mining as well as [the
urban center of] Indiana coal fields? I mean did
the people live here when they would have coal
mines in other counties?

BATMAN: I don't know. I have the impression that that's
right, but I don't think I could speak with any
knowledge, except what I've read.

WBP: Except that you know that a number of prominent
coal mine . . .

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: . . . owners lived here.

BATMAN: Of course, Terre Haute was the center -- I
mean the New York Central and the Pennsylvania,
as they later became known, and then the C. & E.I.

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BATMAN: Chicago & Eastern Illinois, the north-south railroad, and the interurbans that went from here. In the '30s you could ride on the interurbans from here to Sullivan several times a day; you could ride up to Clinton on the interurban. The standard method of transportation between Terre Haute and Indianapolis was by way of the interurban. It stopped in Brazil, went right down the main street. And it stopped in Greencastle. And it was a very pleasant journey to ride on the interurban into Indianapolis. And, of course, there were parallel trains -- the New York Central and the Big Four. It was always interesting to me that the railroads, unlike the airlines, would never honor each other's tickets. If you bought a ticket on the New York Central, it was good only on the New York Central. I don't know anything about the economics of railroading, but it always seemed to me like it was a very narrow policy that would . . .

WBP: Competition continued to . . .

BATMAN: Restrict travel whereas the airlines will make sure you get on a flight.

WBP: Yes. It seems to be a different ethic.

What about Evansville? Evansville, one would think, would be . . . it was also in the center of the coal fields. The coal fields extend down into Kentucky.

BATMAN: Yes. Of course, I don't know anything about it except . . . of course, Evansville is certainly in a pivotal position. The Ohio River was tremendous. And, of course, the Wabash River in that era was quite a place, see. The excursions on the Wabash -- moonlight rides and that sort of thing -- were in vogue into the early '30s. And people would go down and ride the boats. And the dancing parties on the boats would go up and down the river and that sort of thing.

WBP: Do you remember that as a young man here?

BATMAN: Yes. Yes, when I came here it was going out; it was going out fast. But they were still in existence in a limited way. But the Wabash was becoming cluttered up with trees falling, and it was not being kept up. Gradually the Wabash disappeared as an artery of commerce.

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WBP: Do you remember coal being shipped by barge on the Wabash?

BATMAN: No, I don't. I have the impression that that was all over before the '30s, the era of the '30s opened up.

WBP: All right. You know that it existed though before that?

BATMAN: Oh, yes. Yes. There was some coal shipped on the Wabash. To what extent I don't know. I think probably the rails was much more efficient. I don't know that there was a lot. That would be the subject of some investigation, but I don't think there was any great shipments on the Wabash by the era of the 1930s.

WBP: Of course, that's something the Wabash Valley Association was trying to promote.

BATMAN: Oh, yes.

WBP: They felt that the freight rates would be so much lower.

Do you remember flooding on the Wabash?

BATMAN: No. No, except as it exists today. (laughs) I mean, I don't remember any . . .

WBP: Of course, the Wabash Valley Association, one of their themes was that the constant floods . . . intermittent floods caused difficulty for agriculture in the Wabash Valley and . . .

BATMAN: I'm sure that's true.

WBP: . . . therefore, that affected the economy.

BATMAN: I'm sure it did, especially the agriculture economy. And whatever would affect agriculture would have some effect on the rest of us.

WBP: To go back to the coal operators again. Of the ones you named -- Talley, Templeton, Bledsoe, Kolsem, Ferguson, Shirkie, Smith -- what individual was probably the leader or the most influential in coal mining business?

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BATMAN: Well, it's interesting that it is said that the United Mine Workers -- I don't believe they were called that at that time -- were established by . . .

WBP: Eighteen [hundred] ninety, I think they began.

BATMAN: Back in 1890. And prior to that time, I think it was John Templeton who established and was one of the early pioneers of the United Mine Workers.

WBP: I see.

BATMAN: And some of these people who later became operators in the coal business were prominent in the movement to organize the miners. The life of a coal miner in those days was a very hard life and . . .

WBP: That sounds almost contradictory that the later mine owner . . .

BATMAN: That's right.

WBP: . . . had been earlier . . .

BATMAN: Yeah.

WBP: . . . active in organizing mines.

BATMAN: John Templeton, who is now president of the Templeton companies, would be an excellent source of information on the part his family played in the development of the coal industry of which he still is a part. I'm sure it was his grandfather who was very prominent in establishing the United Mine Workers.

WBP: Um hm.

The name Bledsoe is still associated with Terre Haute First National Bank.

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: And, of course, their holdings went into . . . what . . . five or six states?

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BATMAN: Yes, but as far as I know, the Bledsoes are entirely out of the coal business. Walter Bledsoe, Jr., who is a director of the Terre Haute First National Bank, sold their properties to, I believe it was, Peabody Coal. Anyway they are no longer in the coal business as such.

WBP: All right. The Smiths are still in the coal business.

BATMAN: Oh, yes.

WBP: What other individuals are still in it?

BATMAN: Templetons, I understand, have mining properties, but they're not, so far as I know, actively engaged in the production of coal. Lots of . . .

WBP: So you don't know of anyone right now, local citizens who are actively engaged in coal production? I know Peabody and Amax both are in this county.

BATMAN: All of the . . . well, not all -- that's a misstatement -- but the big coal producers that we used to associate with those names have been sold into companies such as Peabody, Amax, Consolidation Coal, and big companies -- most of which are listed on the New York Stock Exchange. So, the coal industry, of course, passed away from the little entrepreneur into the hands of the big companies. Now we have seen within the last . . . well, since the oil crisis -- the energy crisis developed -- we have seen a resurgence of mining, the small coal mines coming back. There are any . . . there are a great many coal mines today that didn't exist 20 years ago.

WBP: There's one on Indiana 46 on the way down to Spencer.

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: It seems to be very productive.

BATMAN: And you drive along, you'll see little . . . little operations with a dozen men, and it's because of the very high price of coal.

WBP: You think that's coming back then?

HOWARD BATMAN
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BATMAN: Oh, yes, no question about it.

WBP: Talley is the name associated with the coal industry here. There were mines named Talley and . . .

BATMAN: That's right. Talleydale. Yeah.

WBP: Do you know anything . . . have you read about Mr. Talley, what his full name was and . . .

BATMAN: Walter Talley . . .

WBP: Walter Talley?

BATMAN: . . . was . . .

WBP: There were several Talleys, were there not?

BATMAN: Yes, there were lots of Talleys in Terre Haute at that time. This house was built by a Talley.

WBP: It was?

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: This is the turn of the century you're talking about?

BATMAN: Pardon.

WBP: This was 1910s?

BATMAN: This house was built in 1936.

WBP: Oh, it was?

BATMAN: And it was built by . . . I think it was Walter Talley's son. And at that time, they were not . . . they were not actively engaged in the coal business.

WBP: To pursue coal a little bit further, you in your practice, did you represent coal mining interests?

BATMAN: Yes. Not in the sense of representing a lot of them, but we did some work for coal companies.

WBP: Individual coal companies?

BATMAN: Yes.

HOWARD BATMAN
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WBP: Did you do work for the Coal Operators' Association?

BATMAN: Yes, we worked on the . . . we worked with acquisitions of coal properties and that sort of thing.

WBP: I see.

Coal communities . . . Vigo County is full of towns, small towns . . .

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: . . . that were once coal mining communities.

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: Which ones do you think of first when you think of coal mining communities?

BATMAN: Well, I think we think of Sanford and Fontanet and Blanford and Clinton, Sullivan, Indiana; Dugger . . . in fact, any little town I suppose you'd mention was a coal town.

WBP: In this area. Blackhawk, Coal Bluff . . .

BATMAN: Blackhawk.

WBP: . . . and Burnett, Tecumseh, yeah. New Goshen . . .

BATMAN: Yes. All . . .

WBP: . . . Shirkieville . . .

BATMAN: I guess all of those . . . Shirkieville, of course. They were coal mining communities. And as you go around today, you can still see some of the signs of the old coal pits and, of course, many of which have been reopened.

WBP. Yes.

BATMAN: The price of coal having gone from two or three dollars a ton to twenty dollars. You could see that in your electric rates.

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WBP: You bet. You bet.

Let's go back to the . . . you mentioned the Irish came . . . Irish were know as Democrats from the time they came into New York City and Tammany Hall met them on the docks and brought them into their precincts. And you also mentioned that Terre Haute has been a strong Democratic town, a laboring man's town. Was there "boss" politics here?

BATMAN: Pardon me.

WBP: Was there "boss" politics here during your lifetime?

BATMAN: Oh, not to the extent we think of it in Chicago or New York. Party organizations were compact and they were loyal, and they were largely at the direction of county chairmen and district chairmen. They had a certain amount of control because of patronage, which is the life blood -- or was at that time -- in politics. But a lot of that has changed. The merit systems that have come into effect have altered a lot of that. Political appointees aren't what they used to be. And the strong grip which they -- the old political bosses -- had largely disappeared. Appointments to the fire and police departments were sort of political plums, and there were a lot of little sinecures and jobs that enabled people in charge of the party to control a vote to a large extent. But a lot of that has slipped away. It used to be . . . for example, when I was in the legislature, we had a state senator from Vigo County. Then we had a joint state senator who represented Sullivan and Vigo County. Well, you can see that the county chairman would have a lot of control over this particular candidate for the senate in this county, and we had three state representatives. Now when the one-man, one-vote theory and all of these other things came about, they split up the counties. You may represent a quarter of Vigo County and a little corner out of Vermillion County and reach over into Clay County which meant that the county chairman largely lost his grip.

WBP: But this wasn't until the mid-'60s though.

BATMAN: Yes, that just came about recently.

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WBP: Yeah.

BATMAN: And I remember back in the old days if you wanted legislation passed or if you wanted legislation defeated, it was common practice to call the county chairman and say, "Look, get on your boy from down here in Vigo County. He's sponsoring such-and-such a bill, and that's going to ruin us down here" and so forth. And so the county chairman'd pick up the phone and his voice was listened to.

Now, this man may be from three or four different districts -- three or four county chairmen -- and he's not about to pay much attention (commences to laugh) to any one of them.

WBP: Yes.

BATMAN: That's due to the coming of the radio and television and they reach people direct.

WBP: Um hm.

BATMAN: And the days in which the county chairman could mark the ballots and tell the precinct committeeman, "Now, you know, get these boys . . . make sure we get these boys through," that's largely disappeared. The handhold has slipped. (laughs)

WBP: However, Terre Haute has had county chairmen who have been very strong.

BATMAN: Oh, yes!

WBP: Up until recently. It may be that they still have county chairmen that are strong.

BATMAN: I think that's true.

WBP: And perhaps you could name some of them that you remember that were particularly . . .

BATMAN: Well, in my era, the era of the '30s, Democratic county chairmen were particularly strong. Howard O'Loughlin was a county clerk and, I think, county treasurer. He was a very . . . he was a very adroit political person. And, oh, we had an era in there in which people were very strong politically. Thomas O'Mara was a very prominent lawyer in this community.

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BATMAN: I don't think he was ever a county chairman, but he was always in the corner of the county chairman.

Little Dick Wernecke was a party whip of that era. And . . . oh, we had a lot of them that came along at that time. They had a certain amount of control because they understood party organization at the precinct level and that's where the work is done. But I don't think . . . I don't think we'll ever see that time again because of the diffusion of voting.

WBP: Were there ways in which the county chairman could see that certain precincts which brought in blocks of votes were rewarded besides . . . I mean, were there things like . . . did they do things like the bosses did in the large cities like provide turkeys for people that didn't have them at Christmas time or coal in the winter for people that needed coal and that sort of thing?

BATMAN: That had largely gone out, disappeared during the '30s. But, yes, I remember in the early '30s that was done. They were to see that . . .

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WBP: And you remember baskets of food in the '30s being delivered to some families.

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: Uh-huh. So, there were . . . in that sense the machine acted to some extent as a social welfare agency.

BATMAN: That's right. That's right.

WBP: In the '30s, of course, during the Depression, it was very much needed, no doubt.

BATMAN: The precinct committeeman was the man that you turned to if you needed a . . . if you wanted a street light on your corner because it was dark and your mother was getting up in years, why you talked with the precinct committeeman about it. And he checked to see if the county commissioners or the city council or the proper authority, if it could be done. And in some places, it could be done.

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WBP: Yeah.

BATMAN: There was a lot of that sort of thing went
on. I'm not sure it was all bad.

WBP: Yeah. The result of this was, of course,
to, I suppose, keep the salaries of public officials
fairly low because they had power . . .

BATMAN: That's right.

WBP: . . . and there might have been other ways of re-
imbursing themselves for the many hours they put
in working for the party and for the local government.

BATMAN: Oh, yes, I suppose there were a lot of little
favors done at that time. They used to have a saying
that . . . I know in the home county that I came
from when I was a young man in grade school and
high school that one of the automobile dealers in
the community was also on the school board. And
they used to say that you could see that Mr. So-
and-so's daughter was going to be teaching in the
school next fall because her father just bought
a new Ford. (laughs)

WBP: Ah-ha! Yes.

BATMAN: (continuing to laugh) And those things happen.
You could tell who was going to get the school teaching
job by who turned up with new cars during the middle
of the summer.

WBP: Sure.

BATMAN: So, I suppose that sort of thing has gone on--
the theory of you scratch my back and I'll scratch
yours. It's not an unusual human characteristic.

WBP: Sure. I was thinking of that just the other
day when Mayor /Pete/ Chalos went to the press and
told the press that he was unable to fill four
positions because the pay was so low in all those
positions that he couldn't get qualified people to
apply for them. Now, that sounds like a much different
situation than a situation in which people were really
anxious to have a city job and they would take them
for whatever . . .

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BATMAN: Of course, I have a theory /about/ this /theory that/ well, you have to pay people to get qualified people. Now, I'm sure that's true to a certain extent. But people don't run for the United States Senate for the money that's in it. A man'll spend a million dollars to be United States Senator to get a job that pays -- well, I suppose with all the trappings of office and the free haircuts and trips to Europe and so forth -- might be equivalent to \$100,000. But who would invest a million dollars to get a \$100,000 job? It's the prestige of it. I mean there's a saying that "the difference between men and boys is the price that they pay for their toys." And I think that . . . I don't think you would get better judges, I mean necessarily . . . well, you'd get better judges but you wouldn't get . . . you wouldn't get the prime quality lawyer just by paying the money.

WBP: Yes.

BATMAN: The idea of getting to serve on the Supreme Court of the United States is the attraction. They could get those fellows for free, almost, because of the prestige. And I don't think you would get better state representatives in the legislature if you paid them \$50,000 a year. You can't . . . the taxpayers can't afford to pay what industry does.

WBP: Um hm.

BATMAN: The president of General Motors, I understand, makes close to a million dollars a year. Well, it . . . I guess he's worth it. At least . . .

WBP: Yeah. (laughs) There aren't too many of those.

BATMAN: There are not too many. But you can't . . . public life, I think the British caught onto that long, long ago. A man could be called "your lordship" and he worked for free. And . . .

WBP: Of course, there's . . . one wonders, I guess, how much prestige there is in city street commissioner.

BATMAN: Well, that's . . .

WBP: And, you know, assistant to the mayor. These are the jobs he's trying to fill.

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BATMAN: And the street commissioner is a very important job. But the taxpayers in this community would rise up in arms if you said we're going to get a street commissioner and he's going to cost us \$50,000 a year.

WBP: Yes.

BATMAN: There'd be a revolution.

WBP: O.K. Now, that brings up an important point. The taxpayers in this community. What are the most important issues in your experience in Terre Haute from election to election? What is it that the people of Terre Haute seem to vote for when they hear it?

BATMAN: Well, you know when you get to talking about issues . . . let's take the county auditor. Now, what issue could lead you to elect county auditor candidate A against county auditor candidate B? They do exactly the same thing. One's a Republican and one's a Democrat. You vote for the personality. You know the fellow; he's a nice guy; and he's a good businessman; he'd do a good job so But there are no . . . are there any issues in a city election? Everybody's going to improve the streets. Everybody's going to improve the parks. Everybody's going to get more economy and good common sense to government.

WBP: I guess, I . . . the question I have is . . . to be more specific, how is it that Ralph Tucker was able to get elected year after year after year?

BATMAN: Personality.

WBP: What is it But he must have done something in the job which people liked.

BATMAN: Well, politics is a sort of an actor's role, isn't it? I think we're seeing a typical demonstration out of the superb performance that Mr. Ronald Reagan is putting on. The Republican party has finally turned up a Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt pulled up to the fireside and had his fireside chat. I knew Republicans who said they wouldn't listen to him because he'll change my mind. And the

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BATMAN: (laughs) Democrats will listen to Reagan and he's changed their mind. You've seen it demonstrated.

And Ralph Tucker was a superb politician. There isn't any question about it. He was affable, he was pleasant, he had been a "Man on the Street" with the microphone as a radio interviewer. He was a good interviewer. He dressed like Jimmie Walker of New York. I knew Ralph one time admitted that he changed suits three times in one day. And he could go into the most rundown home in this community; he'd make the people feel like they were "my very dearest friends." And he never . . . he never went to the extent of some of the present politicians of appearing on TV with a button loose on his shirt. He was always nattily dressed and he was a salesman. And that's . . . that's . . . probably the hallmark of good politics is being a good salesman. He was a charmer in the fact . . . and, of course, . . .

WBP: You're saying personal magnetism. That was . . .

BATMAN: Personal magnetism.

WBP: . . . that's more important than anything else?

BATMAN: I would think so. Wouldn't you? I mean it's . . . you're selling yourself to the public. Now, the first election . . . when Tucker ran for his second term, he would have been beaten by John Ennis. I don't think there's any question in the world about it. And I think Tucker, were he here today . . . if he were here today and he admitted it to me that if it hadn't been for a terrible snowstorm on election day, he would have been defeated.

WBP: Hmm.

BATMAN: He lost by just a handful, less than a hundred votes. John Ennis was a very formidable candidate, a very likable person, and a very fine gentleman. And he would have beaten Ralph, but that was one of the most miserable days -- well, that's when the party organization counted. Ralph knew that his people would be at the polls. And Republicans who would have voted but it was such a bad, rainy day and the snow was so bad, "My vote won't count," /they said/.

WBP: Yeah.

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BATMAN: And he lost by less than a hundred votes. He would have been trounced if it'd been a good day. And that's just . . . he was there at the right time; and I can think of no other candidate . . . with respect to all of them, I can think of no other candidate who ever opposed Ralph who really had a chance. In that respect, he was lucky. After he'd rolled over Ennis, I think the party largely . . . the Republicans largely threw in the towel.

WBP: Was it the same county Democratic chairman throughout the 20 years of Tuckers's office?

BATMAN: I couldn't say that. I would doubt it. I don't think we've had any that could survive (laugh) 20 years. But Tucker was his own man. I mean he managed his own campaigns.

WBP: He was? You mean he was not a party . . .

BATMAN: Oh, yes! He was a party stalwart. He was a party stalwart.

WBP: But he didn't depend on the party to . . .

BATMAN: No. No.

WBP: . . . get the voters.

BATMAN: Tucker depended on his own personality and on his own energies. And even his enemies liked the fellow. He was just a very affable person, and with him it was a game just like coaches of a football team can be buddy-buddies all the way 'til the time the game starts, and then all . . . no holds are barred. (laughs) You know.

WBP: Yes.

BATMAN: And that's the way Ralph was. He was not a particularly good mayor. I mean, he didn't do any great, outstanding things. He just kept getting elected.

But he was the first mayor . . . there may have been one other mayor, Ora Davis -- O-r-a D-a-v-i-s -- back in the '20s, I think was elected a second time. But I don't think any other mayor in Terre Haute ever succeeded himself. Now, I could be wrong about that but Tucker was four times mayor. That smashed all records.

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WBP: Bill Brighton was reelected.

BATMAN: Who?

WBP: Brighton.

BATMAN: Yes. That's right. In modern times Bill Brighton was reelected.

WBP: What do you mean when you said Tucker was not particularly a good mayor?

BATMAN: Well, I don't think he did any outstanding things. McMillan was the most progressive mayor we ever had, certainly in my time.

WBP: How do you mean?

BATMAN: Well, when McMillan was elected mayor, he announced that industries that were then outside the city of Terre Haute would be brought into the city. There was an interesting thing. The Terre Haute Brewing Company was right here at Poplar Street and . . .

WBP: Ninth?

BATMAN: . . . and Ninth was not in the city of Terre Haute.

WBP: Is that right? The city was gerrymandered around it.

BATMAN: Yeah. And that was true of any number of industries. And McMillan had run on that platform. he said, "We furnish fire protection to a lot of these plants that are not within the city. We furnish police protection and there are labor disputes and . . ."

WBP: Sounds familiar, doesn't it? (laughs)

BATMAN: Yes. And he said, "I'll bring them in the city." Well, I think a lot of those businessmen who supported him thought, "Well, that's more campaign oratory. That won't happen."

But immediately after he was elected, McMillan announced that he would start the machinery rolling to bring the industries in the city. And when we're not on the record, I'll tell you what he told one of them (laughs) which was a very interesting thing.

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BATMAN: But they held a meeting of the industrialists who would be affected by that. And they said, "Now, Mac," (I've heard him tell the story many times) "you can't do this." McMillan said, "You wait and see."

Well, he passed the ordinance bringing them into the city and they immediately went to court. And McMillan's lawyers -- the city attorneys -- started their skirmishes and

To his housekeeper who is serving coffee I'm being interviewed. I may be going to jail over this.

WBP: Ha, ha, ha!

BATMAN: Bring some down to the jail house in case anything happens.

WBP: (laughs heartily)

HOUSEKEEPER: Don't mention me in that.

BATMAN: (chuckles)

But it was funny to hear Mac talk about it. He was a stubborn, bullheaded Scotchman from away back, And his erstwhile friends hired their lawyers and went to battle on the case of coming into the city.

So, finally, McMillan despaired of legal tactics. He had no time for depositions and maneuvers and motions to do this and do that. So Mac said to his city attorney, the lawyer who was handling the legal skirmishes, he said, "What's wrong with me stopping up the sewers that go into the plants?" "Oh," his lawyer said, "you can't do that." He said, "Well, why can't I? Suppose I send a truck out there (laughs) and we drop cement in it." He says, "Who's going to stop me?" "Well, you know, probably you'll get into this and that." "Well," Mac says, "let's try it and see." And he says, "Suppose I cut off fire protection?" "Well, you know, you can't do that."

Well, there was a tragic fire happened, and it was a very regrettable incident. But the fire department let a house burn down, and a person was said to have lost their life as a result of it which caused quite a bit of concern. But Mac wouldn't back down.

WBP: He wouldn't?

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BATMAN: No, sir.

WBP: It was a house that was outside the city limits?

BATMAN: Outside the city . . .

WBP: Surrounded by the city, but outside.

BATMAN: And if you . . . there was some sort of a sign you put in your window if you were agreeable to come into the city but (laughs) outside you were a marked house.

WBP: I see.

BATMAN: And there was a tragic fire that occurred and he backed the cement trucks up at one plant and at that point, they threw in the towel

WBP: I see. So he forced . . . literally forced them.

BATMAN: Just forced them into it. (laughs)

I have a lot of admiration for . . .

WBP: He only served . . . he only lasted one term.

BATMAN: He just said he wouldn't run again.

WBP: Oh, he didn't want to run. I see.

BATMAN: No.

WBP: But he did annex a considerable . . .

BATMAN: Oh, yes.

WBP: . . . industrial area.

BATMAN: Sure did!

Now with all . . .

WBP: What else . . . go ahead.

BATMAN: . . . with all due respect to the city industry, a lot of them made substantial financial contributions to the city. They would buy fire trucks and they'd do this and that and the other. But that's not being taxpayers and being taxed like the rest of us.

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WBP: True.

BATMAN: And that was McMillan's theory. I think he was right. He did a lot for the city of Terre Haute. He created a furor when he . . . when instead of following the traditional pattern of appointing some policeman as chief of police who was a staunch party supporter, he brought in his old colonel from the army from outside and told him to organize the police department. Well, that's unheard of.

WBP: Yes.

BATMAN: That was just something out of this world to bring a "foreigner" in and start running the police department.

WBP: Violated the traditions of party politics.

BATMAN: Pardon.

WBP: It violated the traditions of party politics.

BATMAN: Oh! I mean it sent a shock through the (laughs) community to think that . . .

WBP: The Republicans were finally in office and they weren't getting the spoils.

BATMAN: Oh, yeah. It was . . . and he came in. I don't know how good a policeman he was or how good an organizer, but McMillan just brought him in without any question. And he'd been a colonel in the army and, of course, he organized it along Prussian (laughs) standards and . . .

WBP: This was during World War II, wasn't it?

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: He also closed down a lot of the houses of prostitution, didn't he?

BATMAN: Yes. That was done at the insistence of the Navy. That was the end of the red light district in Terre Haute as such.

As I understand it (I've heard Mac tell it), the Navy came in and they had a meeting with him. They said, "You know we're bring these V-8 /V-5 and V-12/ kids in here for training at Indiana State and

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BATMAN: they're right across the street from these houses. "And" they said, "We can't put up with that and they have to go." Now, whether or not Mac would have shut them down anyway, I don't know; but he had an excellent excuse then. So he called the madams together down at the city hall and (commences to laugh) explained the facts of life that houses had to go. Organized prostitution as it was recognized in Terre Haute was to be a thing of the past. He gave them time to dispose of their furniture, music boxes and coke machines and accessories that went with the industry. And in . . . of course, a lot of people said, "Well, they just disappeared and went into the suburbs." Perhaps they did. I don't know. But at least they shut down the district and then, as we know, the industrial development followed and . . .

WBP: You mean urban renewal?

BATMAN: Yes. Um hm.

But the impetus came from the Navy who said they'd have to shut it down.

WBP: How many madams did he bring in /when they were called together/? Do you have any idea?

BATMAN: I have no idea. You can find out. There's one of them (laughs) still living around town.

WBP: I know.

Would you say that by World War II there were maybe a score of them, or 20 of them? Or would you say there were more than that probably?

BATMAN: Oh, I would guess there were at least 20. I remember you could ride along those streets, and they had a mark of identification. There was always a red light burning.

WBP: In the window?

BATMAN: Through the window and it was known to everybody that that's what they were. School children grew up realizing that was part of the community.

WBP: Yes.

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WBP: Well now, one madam didn't really close down until 1971. And there was prostitution -- maybe not organized on a massive scale like it was -- but there was prostitution which apparently had . . . well, I mean it got the Housewives' Effort for Local Progress /HELP/ going in part. And so there was prostitution up through the Tucker years, was there not?

BATMAN: Oh, I'm sure there was. There probably still is today. If you really went out to look for it, I'm sure that there are prostitute . . . every city has them to a certain extent more or less. In some communities, and I think now perhaps they masquerade under a different name.

WBP: Sure. (chuckles)

Would you say Terre Haute . . . we're getting into the area that I really wanted to kind of start with anyway and that was: when you came to Terre Haute, how would you characterize it compared to other Indiana cities? What was unique about it? You talked about the laboring . . . the working man's town and labor-movement town. Are there other aspects . . . we've talked about the red light district. What was it about the city that made it different, made it unique?

BATMAN: I don't suppose it was really a great deal different from Evansville which had its /red light/ district. I don't think it was as . . . I'm not as familiar with it as people in Terre Haute were familiar with the red light district here. Everybody in town knew that it was there and knew where it was and it was a curiosity to drive through it. I think that when people came to Terre Haute, they said, "Where is this district you talk about." And the morbid curiosity in the human being is, "Let's drive down there and look at it."

WBP: It was a tourist attraction.

BATMAN: It was a tourist attraction. I remember that very well. And you would see cars of foreign license plates -- people from other states -- driving through there and the women giggling and talking with one

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BATMAN: another about the industry. I can only speak for it being here. Maybe that sort of thing existed in other cities, but Terre Haute had the reputation. There's no question about that.

WBP: Um hm. If so . . . and would you say that was its main distinction?

BATMAN: I hate to say that but maybe (laughs) it was.

WBP: I mean there was no ski resort here.

BATMAN: (laughs) No. No.

And you know it's an odd thing to me . . . I don't know of any other community in Indiana that can boast of three fine educational institutions such as we have here.

WBP: Um hm.

BATMAN: St. Mary-of-the-Woods, I suppose, is the oldest of the three. And /Indiana/ State Normal as it was known when I was kid and now /called/ Indiana State University is a great educational institution. And Rose Poly /Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology/ as it was called then was a great school. But you never heard of Terre Haute spoken of as a college town. Now, you would hear that of Wabash /College/ . . .

WBP: Crawfordsville.

BATMAN: . . . Crawfordsville. Greencastle's a college town. Bloomington is a college town. Lafayette is a college . . . but you never heard of Terre Haute spoken of as . . . I never did hear of anyone refer to it that way.

WBP: The most important industry in downtown Terre Haute today is Indiana State University.

BATMAN: That's right! One of . . . I suppose that's the biggest payroll we have.

WBP: That's right. Yeah. But, of course, Rose Poly was not in Terre Haute.

BATMAN: Oh, no.

WBP: It was rather small.

BATMAN: Yeah.

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WBP: And so . . .

BATMAN: But St. Mary had a . . . certainly a national reputation, almost . . . well, certainly through the Gay '90s and into this century as a fine finishing school for girls.

WBP: Yes.

BATMAN: I suppose you'd call it a finishing school.

WBP: Are there any other things that you think about that were distinctive about Terre Haute? Think about it not just in 1930 when? You came in '30?

BATMAN: 'Thirty-one.

WBP: 'Thirty-one? You came here in 1931?

BATMAN: Yes.

 No, I can't . . .

WBP: Throughout your lifetime here in Terre Haute, how is it different? Now, you've been a vice president of the State Chamber of Commerce and think of it in those terms now. Compare Terre Haute with other cities that you knew about.

BATMAN: I think that the distinct thing that I think of Terre Haute -- and I've never been able to understand -- is a real lack of civic pride. You hardly ever hear of anyone bragging about Terre Haute. Now, to me that's a strange thing. I don't know why. And you go different places . . . to this day, I'm irritated when people say, "Well, how are things over in 'Sin City'?" And a newspaper reporter that I know of who came over here and did a story on Terre Haute a few years ago talked with me about it and interviewed a lot of people. And when he was finished to go back, he said, "You know, I've visited a lot of cities in Indiana and this is the dullest town I was ever in after nine o'clock at night." He said, "There's nothing going on. You don't have any night clubs." He said, "This is a dull city." And he said, "I came over here to write a great, lurid story (commences to laugh) of the place; and" he said, "this is the dullest place I ever spent an evening in."

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WBP: Was this in the '70s -- 1970 or . . .

BATMAN: This has been within the last four or five years!

WBP: Yeah. Yeah.

Of course, there was that story written by Peter Wyden in The Saturday Evening Post back in 1960 when -- '61?

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: "Terre Haute -- Indiana's Delinquent City."

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: And you served as vice president of the Chamber of Commerce -- State Chamber of Commerce -- after that. What do you think about that story? Was it a . . . you think it was well founded or scurrilous or . . .

BATMAN: Well, I don't remember much about it. Except I think that if you look around enough, you'd find a lot of dirt to write about in a community. Now, Indianapolis, the crime rate over there and the things that go on in that town . . . of course, it's a great big city. You've got to expect that. So, it's unfair to compare Indianapolis and Terre Haute. But . . .

WBP: I guess you have to think of percentages.

BATMAN: Yeah, I suppose that's right. But I'm sure that Terre Haute is a dull city after dark any more.

WBP: Yeah.

BATMAN: As far as I know, there's no gambling going on in Terre Haute and there used to be. I could take you to a half a dozen nice . . . so-called nice restaurants where there'd be gambling in the back rooms.

WBP: O.K. Now, that's what Wyden was talking about, primarily, in his article. There was some prostitution then, but he was primarily talking about the gambling that was going on. And a lot of people who had shops in the downtown area didn't know what was going on upstairs in some cases.

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BATMAN: I think probably that's right. Some people didn't know about it, but if you wandered in, you could find out in a hurry.

WBP: There was a lot of gambling going on?

BATMAN: Oh, sure. But today, I don't know of any of the places that . . . where there's any gambling going on. Maybe it's the economics of the times, that in this community there . . . there isn't . . . maybe there just isn't any need for gambling here any more. Maybe the people who used to gamble aren't interested in it. I don't know.

(both laugh)

WBP: Well, that was another tourist attraction, I guess. And that's gone now, too.

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: So, what else is distinctive though about Terre Haute?

BATMAN: At the present time?

WBP: Well . . . over the years, that has made Terre Haute different from other cities. It's dull now. I guess it's duller than other cities. Perhaps it had more gambling before, more prostitution before. It doesn't have those things now. Maybe we could get . . . is there a way you could get underneath those things? Why was gambling and prostitution going on then and why is it dull now? What was . . . is it the labor? Or is it machine politics or is it the labor unions? The number of working-class people in this community or . . .

BATMAN: Well, I don't think you can generalize on those things. I don't think . . . I don't think our labor situation here is any different from that in other communities. We have a lot of industry in Terre Haute that isn't organized.

WBP: CBS right now.

BATMAN: Yes, for example, the largest industry we have here is not organized.

WBP: But it had a reputation, didn't it?

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BATMAN: Oh, yes!

WBP: That you talked about earlier.

BATMAN: I think the reputation came probably from a number of sources. One, of course, was Eugene Debs. He was certainly an interesting person. He was, as many people know, city clerk here. He worked for Hulman & Company. He served in the General Assembly and he was city clerk. And he was certainly a dedicated, well-meaning person, but he was a real firebrand and some of his statements were at best inflammatory. His statement that as long as there was a man in prison, he would be out carrying the torch to get him out. Why I don't think public opinion really wants that to happen. (laughs) And that focused a lot of attention on Terre Haute. Here was a Socialist candidate and he was from Terre Haute, Indiana. And obviously you ought to stay away from that place if this man is running things.

WBP: Sure.

BATMAN: I think that had its effect. And then, of course, the general strike I think unquestionably damaged Terre Haute because I've heard industry people say that Immediately after the general strike there was a movement organized here. Very prominent Terre Haute citizens joined it. It was called the organization for law and order or something of that sort, in which they viewed with alarm the various things that had happened and pledged that we were going to be a city of law and order. And they had a committee that went around and visited industry in other parts of the nation. Some of the reception they got is, "Wasn't that the town that they shut down, you know, for a day or two completely. I don't know. We'd have to take a second look before we'd think about going into that community."

Well, those stories feed on themselves. And I have no doubt that the community was largely blacklisted as a result. But . . .

WBP: By industry who might have come into town?

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BATMAN: Who might have come. But, of course, a lot of things control besides labor trouble. Well, you can see the industries that have moved in here in spite of that. Pfizer Company came here. Anaconda, J. I. Case, Columbia Records division of CBS . . . I suppose this is one of the largest plants Columbia has. So they must be real happy with the community. Bemis came here in recent years and we've had a lot of industry. And I think Terre Haute's very fortunate we don't have any great big industry here. Anderson and Muncie, when General Motors closes the plant there, the community is in trouble within the first 24 hours.

WBP: Yes.

Do you know of industries specifically that would have come here but chose not to for some reason or another?

BATMAN: No.

WBP: O.K.

Let's go back to Tucker. You said Tucker was not a particularly good mayor.

BATMAN: Well, maybe that's not . . . let me say, he was not particularly a progressive mayor. Now, that's I think perhaps a better choice of words.

WBP: Comparing him to McMillan?

BATMAN: Yes. He didn't innovate any great changes in the community. Maybe we didn't need them at that time. We didn't . . . he didn't create any great sensational things. I think he was as good as the average mayor -- no better, no worse. He was the most flamboyant. He got the attention of a lot of people (laughs), and he caused both good publicity and bad publicity in the community. There was a rash of gambling at that time -- in one of his administrations -- in which the federal government moved in. It was quite a sensational thing. There was a large-scale bookie arrangement working right here in Terre Haute. And I think they had their headquarters maybe in the Terre Haute House. I know they had a number of phone lines going in there. And that happened during his administration. Of course, he got a lot of blame for that. And, naturally, I can't imagine any public official not knowing everything that goes on in the community.

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BATMAN: I think Pete Chalos could tell you a lot of things about the community we don't know about it /but/ he knows exists. And in many cases he would like to stop /them/ and probably couldn't; and in other places, there's not much happening so he don't stir up a storm over something. (laughs) You don't take a sledge hammer to kill a fly, you know.

WBP: Yes.

Basically, you're . . . would it be accurate to say . . . that Tucker was elected . . . was re-elected for five terms?

BATMAN: I believe it was just four.

WBP: He served 20 years.

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: So that would be five, wouldn't it?

BATMAN: Yes, he got 20 years . . .

WBP: From '47 until '67, I believe.

BATMAN: I think there was a . . . yeah, I guess it was five . . .

WBP: Consecutively.

BATMAN: Yeah.

WBP: Would it be fair to say that he gave the people of Terre Haute pretty much what they wanted?

BATMAN: Well, I think that's true of any candidate who's reelected. I think Roosevelt was reelected time after time because people wanted him. Of course, the machinery and organization has something to do with it; but I don't think you can cram somebody down the people's throat with the best organization in the world. Tucker was a popular person.

WBP: But it was more . . . personal magnetism, that has, you know, that has to be maybe the first prerequisite.

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BATMAN: That's right.

WBP: But that still . . . you can be a magnetic individual and still do things wrong . . .

BATMAN: That's right.

WBP: . . . and antagonize people . . .

BATMAN: That's true.

WBP: . . . and . . .

BATMAN: McMillan might not have been reelected in this community. He told me that he didn't think he could be reelected because the people that he had run over (laughs) were pretty prominent people, and he might have had trouble raising a war chest.

WBP: I see. O.K. So one of the things you have to do is keep the prominent people satisfied, too.

BATMAN: That's right. The people who are going to spend their money on you have to be pretty happy with you. And I know a lot of Republicans who would not admit it that voted for Ralph Tucker. Because they could go down and talk to Ralph if they were Republicans and sit across the desk from him and explain their position. And Ralph, he was all things to all people. And I know Republicans that not only voted for him but contributed to him because what they wanted or needed, if it didn't run over anybody, Ralph would see that they got it.

WBP: All right.

BATMAN: If a merchant on the street who is recognized as a dues-paying Republican found that Ralph was perfectly willing to help him on a project, why he'd go down to his office and talk with him about it. And when time came to vote, he went in there and voted for Tucker.

WBP: O.K. What's an example of the kind of project that Ralph might help a man with?

BATMAN: Oh, seeing that the parking . . . there was no parking behind your store, blocking the traffic there; or proper street light at the right time; or a little additional police protection and stuff like that.

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WPB: Yes.

BATMAN: A mayor has a chance to give out a lot of favors without damaging anybody in particular. And a lot of people would get favors if they went down and talked to the mayor about it. A lot of people found (laughs) that out. Ralph's door was always open to you. You could . . . and his bitterest political enemies would sometimes be, socially, quite friendly.

WPB: Yes.

BATMAN: And he had that . . . he never held it against anyone for voting against him, working against him. It was all good clean fun.

WPB: Yes.

At the beginning of the interview you said that one of the reasons you decided not to run . . . be in politics was because you didn't like the idea of going out and having to strong-arm people to bring money in and you couldn't afford to do it because you weren't independently wealthy. Ralph wasn't independently wealthy, was he?

BATMAN: No. And a lot of people to this day will say, well, Ralph lined his pockets as mayor. But there are two things that I have often thought about him. I don't know anyone who was more harassed with the Internal Revenue Service. He was investigated constantly. And he was never indicted for anything.

WPB: Who was his attorney?

BATMAN: I don't remember who represented Ralph. He probably used different ones because he was a great man to play the field. (laughs)

WPB: Is that right?

BATMAN: But I know, for example, Ray Thomas, who was his city comptroller, came under suspicion. And our office represented Ray Thomas in the investigation. And this I personally know that when it was over, the government paid back two or three thousand dollars that he'd overpaid in taxes.

WPB: Ha!

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BATMAN: So in that particular case, I know that at that time that Ray certainly was not guilty of any indiscretions or . . . I think it was bad arithmetic that turned (laughs) his up.

WBP: Yes.

BATMAN: But Tucker had many investigations and was never . . . he never changed his life style. He never drove a Cadillac. He'd drive a sporty-looking, small car. And he lived in a very modest, nice little house over here on Barton. And if he received any illicit gains, it was never exposed. His family never lived beyond their means.

WBP: True.

BATMAN: It was sort of . . . I think maybe he took a page from Mr. Richard J. Daley, who I understand lived in the same modest little house in his (laughs) neighborhood 'til the day he died. There is a certain . . . certain political sharpness to that type of activity.

WBP: Yes.

In any community there are people who are the . . . financially influential and who have considerable power, economic power. And Ralph clearly kept those people happy. They would . . .

BATMAN: Oh, yes!

WBP: . . . continue to . . .

BATMAN: Sure. He never belonged to the country club. But a lot of people who did would entertain him socially.

WBP: How important . . . in Terre Haute how important are those people who are behind the scenes and have considerable economic clout? How important are those in local politics? (pause) Are they . . . would you say they're decisive?

BATMAN: I don't think so. /As a/ matter of fact, I don't think people take the interest in politics to be . . . to be politically influential. It's always puzzled me in this community that more people in

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BATMAN: the affluent circles aren't interested in politics. I don't think outside of contributing to the party they do very much. Many of them contribute to both parties.

WBP: They contribute to politics basically out of civic duty, but they don't have any . . .

BATMAN: That's right.

WBP: . . . specific goals in mind.

BATMAN: I've known a lot of people in this community who contribute regularly to both parties, making sure that their name isn't mentioned maybe except in one.

WBP: Yes.

But McMillan might have antagonized some of those people . . .

BATMAN: Oh, yes! Yes.

WBP: If they would have . . . if they'd felt antagonized by a candidate . . .

BATMAN: Oh, you can always get more contributions to beat a candidate than you can to elect one. And it's . . . I always will think -- and a lot of people will think -- that Paul McNutt might have been President of the United States had it not been for the general strike in Terre Haute, because he was a very popular governor. He was a very intelligent man; he probably was the handsomest man who was ever governor of Indiana; he was a great public speaker; and he was a charming man. And when he had to order the troops into Terre Haute, the labor movement in Indiana was violently opposed to him. And in the convention in Chicago when there was a great movement for McNutt to be nominated as vice president, had he been nominated and elected vice president with Roosevelt, it's conceivable that Harry Truman would never have been heard of outside of the United States Senate. And McNutt always attributed part of his failure to be nominated to the Terre Haute strike.

WBP: The strike lasted two days after the . . . I mean after the troops came in the strike was over. They . . .

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BATMAN: About a 48-hour strike, effective the first day, really.

WBP: How long did the troops stay?

BATMAN: Oh, martial law existed for a long time.

WBP: Six months, I think.

BATMAN: Yes, I think that's right. I think it was . . . well, the strike hit the 23rd or the 24th of July. I think it was five or six months that martial law as such on paper existed in Terre Haute.

WBP: Why?

BATMAN: I don't know why it went on for so long. That was another thing that McNutt . . . he may have used bad judgment there. Maybe he could have released the city in 30 days or something like that, but he didn't. And that caused a lot of criticism.

WBP: Do you know the reason for the strike?

BATMAN: Well, it had started at the Columbian Enameling & Stamping Company, and then it just grew out of all proportions. It just got completely out of hand.

WBP: Do you know the reason why the Columbian Enameling & Stamping people struck?

BATMAN: Well, it was . . . specifically, no. It was a wage dispute -- wage and working conditions. And then I think there's no question but what they brought in what was known at that time -- I guess still is -- strikebreakers, professional people who would come in to work and to defend the property.

WBP: Management then was anxious to break the union?

BATMAN: Oh, you . . . well, I don't know that they were anxious to break the union, but they were anxious to keep operating and not . . . and not agree to the union demands, whatever those might have been.

WBP: Do you know who the local people might have been who requested the governor to declare . . .

BATMAN: Well, of course, he was eventually requested by the mayor.

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WBP: Yeah. But somebody must have put the pressure on the mayor because a mayor . . .

BATMAN: Well, the pressure was awfully hot when the city was completely shut down. I mean . . . I remember quite well people were reluctant to drive their cars. There were no filling stations open. I know one family who had a house full of guests, and they had no bread in the house and no milk or anything.

WBP: There was amazing solidarity among the labor unions . . . all the unions going together . . .

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: . . . in support basically of Columbian Enameling workers.

BATMAN: Yes. I think perhaps it was not an organized effort by the labor unions as such as much as it was a few real leaders in the violent side of the labor movement. I don't think the local unions by resolution or anything adopted . . . it sprung up just like a mob springs up. There was no particular organized leadership. It was just a . . . just a wild group that took over.

WBP: Of course, Shubert Sebree, the old socialist, maintained before he died that, of course, the whole thing was perpetrated by the capitalists . . .

BATMAN: Oh, yes! Yes.

WBP: . . . to break the back of labor.

BREAK IN THE RECORDING

BATMAN: . . . And the newspapers at that time . . . the newspapers, of course, were shut down (laughs) for a couple of days. I think the only thing they didn't bother . . . the only things were the banks and the post office. But other than that, I think she was pretty . . . a pretty wild affair.

WBP: Yes.

Well, it certainly affected the city's image and it's something that I suppose for the good of the city it would be best not to pursue. But on the other hand it is an interesting, very, very important episode in American labor history, social history, and economic history.

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BATMAN: I've heard there're only three or four cities where it ever occurred. I expect that could be documented.

WBP: Yes, I think that's right. And it's practically worthy of an article, historical article.

You mentioned that the financial leadership in the community was relatively apolitical. They would contribute to both parties but . . .

BATMAN: I think so. I don't think there's any . . . been any . . . and that may be true in all communities. I wouldn't know but I'm sure that . . . I've always had the feeling that people who donated \$50,000 or \$100,000 to the candidacy of a prominent national candidate surely had something in mind that they would like to get back for their money. It just never occurs to me that anyone would turn loose with vast amounts of money without some reasonable expectation of being favorably received if the time (commences to laugh) ever came that they needed help.

WBP: Well, it seems to me that you wouldn't be a good Democrat if you didn't realize that or (laughs) understand it.

BATMAN: (laughs) Well, I . . .

WBP: Particularly after the Nixon years.

BATMAN: And I think most people recognize that as a fact of life. It isn't exactly bribery. I don't know whether . . . where bribery begins and leaves off, but I just can't conceive of a person being so interested in seeing a man elected governor or United States senator and giving a large sum of money unless he had hoped to reap something out of it.

WBP: Sure.

Isn't that same thing true for mayor though?

BATMAN: For mayor? I would think so.

END OF TAPE 1

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WBP: Using that logic, one could say then that if Tucker was not a particularly outstanding mayor -- he wasn't progressive -- that was to some extent the way his financial backers wanted it.

BATMAN: That's probably right. I think a lot of people make contributions to the party because . . . well, it's like a lot of people make contributions to the church. They don't go very often, but they feel it's a necessity to regularly contribute to their church. It's a necessary thing in the community to have good churches, and a lot of people who are not recognized as what you might call churchgoers still are regular contributors.

WBP: Yes.

BATMAN: And I think maybe that's true of politics. Well, you know, your father always gave to the party, and we think you ought to contribute something and so, "Well, O.K." and . . . (chuckles)

WBP: Well, during Tucker's administration, as I understand it, there weren't too many industries that came in. Terre Haute's population remained basically stationary; it didn't increase. There were some scandals. The city continued to have a bad image nationally. There were the scandals . . . gambling. Housewives' Effort for Local Progress was, I suppose, an outstanding chapter of response to the bad image.

BATMAN: That's right.

WBP: But yet Tucker continued to be in office, and Terre Haute continued not to have qualities which made it a place where people wanted to move their business. And still he kept getting elected.

So now, there you are. He must have done something that kept people happy and I wonder just what have you . . .

BATMAN: Well, nothing outside of that national gambling ring that was discovered operating here . . . That's the only, what you might say, scandalous event that I can remember that occurred during his administration.

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BATMAN: So, I think the average person would say, "Well, you know, Ralph's no better, no worse than the others've been." And the status quo . . . Terre Haute seems to be a "status quo" community.

WBP: Why? (pause) The "status quo" now has the city in a place where the largest single sector of the population is over 65. The next largest is under 21. And they're going to leave after they finish their education at ISU [Indiana State University].

BATMAN: Yeah.

WBP: Where does that leave Terre Haute? That leaves Terre Haute with a quickly dwindling population.

BATMAN: Well, it is interesting to see how this . . . how the community . . . if we're to believe the census -- and that's all we have to go on is the official census -- it is in a declining . . .

WBP: Well, at least the city is. And the county itself may be. It's starting to now a little bit.

BATMAN: That's right.

Of course, Indianapolis, the exodus from Indianapolis is very interesting. They are moving out, maybe for a different reason. I don't know, but . . .

WBP: Are they moving out of Marion County?

BATMAN: Yes. I believe Hamilton County is the fastest-growing county in Indiana.

WBP: Huh. Where's that?

BATMAN: Hamilton County is directly north -- Carmel, Indiana.

WBP: O.K.

BATMAN: And the . . .

WBP: They're moving out of the Indianapolis suburbs into that area?

BATMAN: That's right.

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WBP: That's taxes to some extent. The fleeing of city taxes.

BATMAN: That's the story of people leaving the inner city. I think it's interesting to see what's happening to downtown Terre Haute I would like to know what it will look like 20 years from now.

WBP: Yeah.

Well, of course, the entire sector, the entire Midwest is moving population to the South and the Southwest. So, that even makes . . . that makes Terre Haute's dilemma even larger, I assume.

BATMAN: More vulnerable.

WBP: Yeah.

BATMAN: It is interesting that this is one of the largest cities of old people in the country.

WBP: Yeah.

BATMAN: Here and St. Petersburg, Florida.

WBP: Yes.

Well, would you say that one of Tucker's reasons for his appeal was that he kept the tax rates low? Was that an issue?

BATMAN: Oh, I suppose. It might be called an issue. But I don't think the average person . . . you called it to my attention but it never occurred to me before that that was an interesting feature about . . .

WBP: Well, you mentioned it earlier when you said that tax rates had been increased . . . taxpayers would revolt.

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: And so that was . . .

BATMAN: He did play on that theme a lot that he'd been able to hold the line on taxes, and that has a popular appeal at election time.

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WBP: And it's not just Terre Haute. It's the state of Indiana. Otis Bowen . . .

BATMAN: Everyplace.

WBP: . . . campaign . . .

BATMAN: Right.

WBP: . . . keeping taxes low. And if you keep . . . you don't have to . . . that's a good excuse for not doing too much, because you don't have the money to do it.

BATMAN: It's like Walter Maehling, who succeeded me in the house. /He/ said he early learned to be successful in the legislature, "Never vote," he said, "for an increase in taxes and never vote against an appropriation."

WBP: Ha, ha! Right! O.K.

Tell me a little about your experience with Tony Hulman. What kind of a man was he?

BATMAN: Well, Tony was number 1, a delightful person. He was a charmer and he was a very astute businessman. He was philanthropic. Many of the things he did were not things on which you would get publicity. I've heard Tony being criticized for lots of things that were named after him or carried his family name -- Hulman Field and Hulman Street and the Hulman auditorium and things like that. Personally, I have always felt that any man who gave a large sum of money was perfectly entitled to have his name emblazoned across the whole thing. I would. (chuckles) And I remember the name "Carnegie" showing up on a great many libraries, and I see nothing wrong with that. I don't think it's a sign of egotism; I think it's a sign of pride in a family name and pride in being able to do it.

And I think certainly Tony Hulman was one of the great factors in Terre Haute. I wish there were more people like him. He was a very good businessman. He was a very interesting person from the standpoint of being, they used to say, "as common as an old shoe." I'm sure more people called him Tony than ever called him Mr. Hulman, and that was true of many of his

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BATMAN: employees. And I think that endeared him to the public, and I think he was envied by a lot of people who could have contributed and didn't have the means. I think that some people who had the means were somewhat irritated that he set a pretty fast pace.

WBP: Explain. How do you mean?

BATMAN: In that he gave to things and other people didn't. I don't think Terre Haute can be characterized as a community of large givers. To my way of thinking, a community that has trouble meeting its Community Chest goal every year, something is wrong. I don't know why that is but I know that of some organizations that have surveyed the community have said one of the first things that industry coming into a community looks to see how . . . what is the community spirit? And one of the first criteria is how do they . . . what is their attitude towards giving -- Community Chest and things like that. And this town does not have a high mark in that regard. I don't know how often we have made our goal, but I know there have been many times when we haven't.

WBP: Um hm.

BATMAN: And I don't know why that is. I guess maybe it goes back to what I mentioned a while ago, there just doesn't seem to be a lot of pride in Terre Haute. People don't go around bragging about the community. You hear people in Kokomo and different places I've been that always . . . always boosting their community, saying what a fine place it is. I don't hear much of that in Terre Haute.

WBP: O.K. now. It's interesting how my question about Tony Hulman led to your answer about there's not much giving and people don't have much pride. Is there any connection . . . do you see . . . is there a connection you see between Tony Hulman and that? I mean . . . I don't . . .

BATMAN: Well, I think Tony was very proud of Terre Haute, and he regretted hearing people make derogatory remarks about the community. I've heard him express opinions on that. Of course, we've had other big givers in the community. But Hulman, in recent time, has received a lot of publicity

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BATMAN: because of the gifts his family made to Rose-Hulman and his sponsorship of the auditorium here and, of course, the Hulman field, which is named after him.

WBP: You mentioned the fast pace. Do you feel that the other people who were capable of making large gifts felt that it was very basically Tony's domain and that they didn't want . . . or they felt that since he was doing it, they didn't have to or maybe they shouldn't because he was doing it?

BATMAN: I don't know. I wouldn't want to venture an opinion on that. Of course, giving is a personal thing. You don't know why people give and why they don't give. I'm sure there's a lot of wealth in Terre Haute, a lot of wealthy families that . . .

WBP: I've heard that there's more wealth in Terre Haute than in most cities its size. Is that true?

BATMAN: I wouldn't have any idea on that.

WBP: A sizable number of what one could call millionaires?

BATMAN: I wouldn't know. I don't . . . that's an interesting question, but I would doubt that we have a disproportionate number of wealthy people.

WBP: Well, the county has been . . . I guess the statistics show it's an economically-depressed area.

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: Per capita income is lowest in the state.

BATMAN: Yes, that's true. So, there again you go back to the fact, well, if this is such a hot labor town, why is it that the figures or the statement you just made is true.

WBP: That's right.

BATMAN: It must not be a hot labor town because the hot labor towns are the ones with the highest scales.

WBP: Yes.

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BATMAN: I think!

WBP: That's right. It's not a labor town. It has a bad labor reputation but the statistics show it isn't.

BATMAN: I think that Terre Haute's reputation is something like that of a fallen woman that's very hard to recapture (commences to laugh) and turn the thing around.

WBP: Yes.

BATMAN: And I think probably that's our trouble here. We haven't been able to get the public over the state to realize that this is a very fine community.

WBP: Was Tony Hulman interested in doing that -- with helping to refurbish the image of the community?

BATMAN: Yes, I know that he was upset and expressed the opinion that when he would go to different meetings that people would refer to Terre Haute, as I have mentioned . . . I'll go to State Chamber of Commerce boards and invariably somebody will say to me, "Well, how are things in 'Sin City' today?"

WBP: Yeah, yeah.

BATMAN: To get back to Tucker -- we seem to be gravitating back there. I remember when he ran for governor that there was a very, very dirty piece of literature circulated telling about Terre Haute; and they had some pictures in this pamphlet which showed dancing girls, mostly unclad -- pictures in night clubs and places. And then in fine print someplace in the book it said, "The pictures here were not made in Terre Haute, Indiana, but they are typical of the type." It was a real dirty piece of literature which, of course, in politics is something you gotta expect. But that was particularly offensive because when you looked at those pictures you immediately assumed that these were Terre Haute scenes. And yet in the book someplace they covered it by saying, "These are typical of night life in Terre Haute."

WBP: There are specific instances which can be cited of Tony working with local leaders to bring in industry, aren't there?

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BATMAN: Oh, yes! Yes. Tony spent money and financed operations and used his influence in the financial community in other places to try and attract industry to Terre Haute. That I know about.

WBP: And that's crucially important -- the financial community generally in the Midwest.

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: Chicago . . .

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: . . . and Indianapolis and . . .

BATMAN: And he had broad and wide connections. I mean Tony had . . . was educated at Yale. He knew some of the most prominent industrialists in the country. He was a friend of the Firestones and a number of the large automotive people. I know that he had tried to influence them to establish plants in this community, had gone out of his way and spent money and financed groups of people to try and entice industry in. But, there are, of course, a lot of things enter into that. Freight rates are important. If the freight rates aren't right . . . the tax situation in the community and all those things that motivate companies into coming into a community have to be considered. The fact that we're close to the Illinois line -- in some instances, the state of Illinois would offer inducements right across the line which would counteract inducements in Indiana.

We had this very vicious what they call the inventory tax in Indiana for a long time. Cities who were close to the state line were at a terrible disadvantage. Fortunately, we got rid of that, but that kept a lot of people from considering Terre Haute. But . . . no, Tony was very much dedicated to bringing industry into this community.

WBP: I would have assumed that if he couldn't do it, nobody could. And . . .

BATMAN: I think that's right. He had the proper social and business connections. People would listen to him.

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WBP: Yes.

BATMAN: I mean he picked up the telephone to talk to Mr. Firestone, he would get through.

WBP: Sure.

BATMAN: And that was true of a lot of business executives throughout the country. And just because industry doesn't come here . . .

WBP: Doesn't mean he didn't try.

BATMAN: That's right.

WBP: Doesn't mean he didn't.

BATMAN: There are many reasons that they might not locate here because of the labor troubles. I don't think labor troubles have seriously disturbed people coming, but I can see where business executives would want to ask questions about it at least.

WBP: Is there any sense that you had that Terre Haute has been at a disadvantage compared to other cities because other cities competed harder for business, for industry? Such as Indianapolis. Did Indianapolis because the statehouse was there and the governor was there and the governor and the mayor lived in the same city, did they systematically do things like get the Interstates /highways/ to center on Indianapolis and . . . instead of Terre Haute?

BATMAN: Oh, sure, I think that's done. It's natural to do it. I've heard that Indianapolis has the finest road system -- their belt road around the city and getting off at anyplace. It has attracted a lot of industry. Why, I don't think there's any question but what Terre Haute is hurt by the fact that we have two exits here off of I-70, and there're small communities in Indiana that have several exits off.

Now, a lot of people blame Tucker for that. And I don't know, but he may not have pushed hard enough to get additional exits. Some people say, "Well, it's because he was a Democrat and the administration at the time was Republican." I don't believe that. I thing that if a strong case had been made . . . maybe the citizens of the community didn't rise up

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BATMAN: in arms and go over to the state highway commission and say, "Here's the largest city between Indianapolis and St. Louis and we've got really one exit over to road /U.S./ 41 and then one exit at the edge of town." And I'm sure that if there had been a community effort made, that situation wouldn't have existed. Maybe Tucker should have alerted the community and alarmed it to the disastrous effect. I don't know.

WBP: Um hm.

BATMAN: But certainly we didn't get good treatment when that thing happened.

WBP: Yes. Do you know whether or not . . . was Mr. Hulman involved? Did he attempt to . . .

BATMAN: I don't know.

WBP: . . . influence them?

BATMAN: I don't know whether he . . . I feel sure had he been, he would have taken a very strong position in it.

WBP: Yeah, but you don't know what . . .

BATMAN: No, and, of course, I think maybe you and I as citizens didn't realize what a serious thing it was.

WBP: That's right. That's right. Hindsight's always . . .

BATMAN: That's right.

WBP: . . . easy.

BATMAN: And maybe . . . maybe the state highway commission blundered. Maybe their study wasn't adequate on the thing. I'm sure they would say that today . . .

WBP: Sure.

BATMAN: . . . because it's caused them trouble as well as the community trouble.

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WBP: Well, the other thing is that I-65 has taken all the traffic that used to come down U.S. 41.

BATMAN: Right.

WBP: And 41 is just . . . never got four-laned and it never became an Interstate . . .

BATMAN: No.

WBP: . . . and instead I-65 paralleled it, U.S. 41 went out of business just like an old railroad would when they built another track parallel to it.

BATMAN: Exactly. Exactly.

WBP: And it /I-65/ became the main drag between Chicago and Florida. And that . . . I mean that had to hurt.

BATMAN: A lot of things that . . . a lot of things like that have hurt Terre Haute. Now, whether we could have done anything about it, I don't know but . . .

WBP: There's a sense in which Tony Hulman was bigger than Terre Haute. He was identified with Indianapolis, the Motor Speedway.

BATMAN: Of course, that's what really projected Hulman into the national spotlight, I think -- the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

WBP: So, in that sense though, one could say he had divided loyalties. He had a major economic interest in . . .

BATMAN: That's right.

WBP: . . . the welfare of Indianapolis. But his home was here and his family roots were here. And so I suppose he was constrained by that to some extent. I don't know.

BATMAN: I think his loyalty was always strongly Terre Haute. The Speedway is bigger than Indianapolis. I mean it's . . . the drawing card to that is phenomenal. It's really sensational how it built up and for the first time, it became a profitable operation. I

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BATMAN: mean the prior owners of the Speedway were always in financial trouble. It was a dingy-looking place before Hulman took it over. And now, of course, it's one of the spectacular sports arenas in the world.

WBP: That's right. And other motor speedways haven't been able to compete with it.

BATMAN: No, and, of course, Speedway management will tell you -- and I know it's true -- that no money has been taken out of the Speedway, with all of the hundreds of thousands of dollars -- millions, I suppose -- that it has generated. It has all been put back into improvements of the Speedway plant.

WBP: I've heard that the Speedway's worth over a hundred million dollars.

BATMAN: You mean as the selling price? I don't . . . I have no idea. Of course, it would . . . with television being what it is today and the advertising world being what it is, I don't know who could put a price on it because it has so many facets outside of just being a racing arena.

WBP: Sure.

Going back to Tucker again, who . . . maybe you can't name names but if you can, who were the major economic powers . . . the major financial interests in the city of Terre Haute from 1947 until '67? Tony Hulman had to be one. I mean he's a super power, isn't he?

BATMAN: I suppose you'd call it that. He never . . . he was never very flamboyant with it, but I think everyone knew that he was very influential in the community. He certainly got the most publicity because of the Speedway and because of the . . .

WBP: Would you say that he could have done this? He could have said, "All right, I don't want Ralph Tucker to be mayor next term," and if he had said that, then Ralph Tucker wouldn't have been?

BATMAN: Oh, I don't think his saying it would have . . . as far as influencing votes are concerned, I . . .

WBP: But what about influencing the campaign kitty?

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BATMAN: I don't really think that people can control votes or public opinion by the mere statement of it. I just don't . . . I wouldn't think so.

I think one thing that aided Tucker . . . with all the due respect to his opponents, I can't remember any opponent he had with the exception of John Ennis. The average person today couldn't name one of them. I have a little trouble recalling their names myself (laughs) and I've tried to keep track. But they were . . . most of them were, without being disrespectful, were not colorful. Ralph was colorful and in politics that's important. They were nice, honest, sincere, dedicated people which do not charm voters. (chuckles) I mean it's . . .

WBP: But might be good public servants?

BATMAN: That's right. May have been real good mayors but they're . . .

WBP: We're talking about a problem . . . maybe a flaw in the political system in that sense. If you assume that Ralph Tucker, since he was not progressive, he . . . his defeat might have brought (laughs) progress to Terre Haute.

BATMAN: Could have, that's true.

WBP: There may be a flaw in the political system.

BATMAN: I don't . . . I really don't think that's a flaw in the political . . . I think the political system we have is all right. I'm a real firm believer in the two-party system. I don't think much of the civil service idea. I really think that party responsibility is the best safeguard we have. I think if the party gets rotten, you throw the rascals out and bring in a new group. I think you have to fix party responsibility. I think if a party generates or permits a scandal, they must pay the penalty. And they bring in other people who promise to do better; and if they don't, you throw them out.

WBP: Yes.

BATMAN: But I . . .

WBP: And then the people get what they deserve.

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BATMAN: The people get what they deserve, sure. And I've always . . . I've always felt that there's nothing wrong with the system. It takes -- and even more today than ever -- the image of the individual. He shows up on television every day and . . .

WBP: Tell me other leaders in the community -- the civic leaders, financial leaders -- besides Tony Hulman who have been influential?

BATMAN: Well, I don't think you can overlook Mr. Benjamin Blumberg and his contributions to this community. He was certainly a generous and philanthropical man, and I think he was a very prominent leader in Terre Haute. And I suppose we've had a great many, but his achievements have been earmarked. Blumberg Hall at Indiana State, which I think was certainly appropriately named. And Mr. Rea, who was long before my time, who made Rea Park possible to the community. And I'm sure that Demas Deming made contributions that left his mark here. And then, of course, there's Dobbs Park out east of town and Collett Park . . .

WBP: But during your time since 1931 Blumberg was living during that period?

BATMAN: Oh, yes.

WBP: Is there anyone else?

BATMAN: Well, I'm sure I'm overlooking someone. I'm not . . . but the two names that I think pop into our minds is Blumberg and Hulman.

WBP: Um hm. O.K.

BATMAN: Maybe it's because . . . maybe there were other philanthropic people who didn't want their name linked with something. I don't know.

WBP: Sure.

How important has the trucking industry been to Terre Haute?

BATMAN: Pardon me.

WBP: How important has the trucking industry been?

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BATMAN: Oh, I think it was very important because it supplemented and complemented the rail industry from the standpoint of being able to give nationwide service.

When Eastern Motor Express went out and also the other trucking line, I think that must have hurt the community to a certain extent.

WBP: I've heard that this was a major trucking center. Lovelace and Eastern Express are two that come to mind, but there were many other truck terminals here, at least at one time.

BATMAN: Yes. I don't know what caused the demise of Eastern as a local truck center. I don't know enough about the trucking industry.

WBP: Well, Terre Haute, of course, is central . . . I mean equidistant between St. Louis, Cincinnati, Chicago. And then of course, in between there's Evansville and Indianapolis and . . .

BATMAN: Well, you draw a circle 500 miles around Terre Haute, it's phenomenal the great area -- trading area you might say. Well, you couldn't call 500 miles, but the contact we have with the great metropolitan centers around here is astonishing.

WBP: Were there other men in this community who understood that and had a vision of what was possible for Terre Haute as a commercial . . .

BATMAN: Well, I think they did when they wore their button saying "100,000." I think (laughing) they . . .

WBP: Yeah. Back in the 1920s.

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: But not . . . not during your memory?

BATMAN: No. I think . . . it just seems like Terre Haute decided to stand still, didn't it?

WBP: Ha, ha!

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WBP: I was in Indianapolis yesterday on the . . .
and doing some looking for some suits and I was
along . . . just inside the Interstate, the beltway,
[I-] 465 . . .

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: . . . and there are acres and acres of truck terminals
there.

BATMAN: Yes. Well, they say that is directly attri-
butable to the fact that they have this magnificent
system of going around the city and taking off
down a road and here's their terminal right there.

WBP: It was within stone's throw of the interstate.

BATMAN: Yeah.

WBP: Forrest Sherer has been an important factor
in . . .

BATMAN: Very important, yeah. Forrest . . . Forrest
was a very, very prominent citizen, a great citizen
in the community and had wide following as a leader
in the community.

WBP: Forrest Sherer said to me one time that he
thought Terre Haute was just the right size.

BATMAN: Was what?

WBP: That it was just the right size. It had the
advantages of a small town. It had kind of the
community spirit of a small town and yet . . . but
it had the advantages also of a larger city -- a
larger metropolitan area -- and it was just the
right size.

BATMAN: Well, that's . . . I think maybe there's some
logic to that. You know I've never found anyone
who moved here from someplace else that didn't like
Terre Haute. And I am amazed at the number of
retired people who could live anyplace in the United
States who came in here and decided to stay. I can
just name two that you and I both know -- everybody
in the community knows them. John Logan, who
moved in here to head up Rose-Hulman. I don't know
whether he'd ever been in the town before in his
life, perhaps never. When he retired, he elected

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BATMAN: to stay here. And then, of course, when Dr. Alan Rankin retired as head of Indiana State, I don't know whether he'd ever been in . . . I suppose he'd been here, but he certainly was not educated in this community. I don't know whether he went to school in Indiana at all or not. He came here to head up Indiana State University and he retired and he elected to stay here.

Well, the town must have some sort of attraction because both of those men could live just as well in any of the 50 states as they do, but they decided to stay here.

WBP: Yeah.

BATMAN: So, there must be a lot of pretty good people here.

WBP: Friendly people.

BATMAN: Yeah.

WBP: Is that what you'd say?

BATMAN: And you look around. I know a number of business executives who came in here with, shall we say, "foreign" companies like Bemis or J.I. Case and whose executives have retired. And instead of moving to Naples, Florida, they stay here.

So there . . . I'm sure it does have some of the advantages of a small town. You in your circle of friends, you know about everybody you want to know (commences to laugh) in Terre Haute.

WBP: Of course.

BATMAN: (continuing to laugh) Some maybe that you'd rather not know! (laughingly)

WBP: Uh-huh.

BATMAN: And it isn't an expensive town in the sense of Indianapolis or anyplace like that. We don't have real expensive, luxury restaurants. We have real nice restaurants that are . . . you can get into a reasonably high-cost dinner here or you can go to McDonald's. We have those advantages. I'm told that the country club dues here are among the very lowest anyplace in the state.

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WBP: O.K.

BATMAN: And we have the Elks Club which is a fine country club. There's one thing that has always puzzled me. We don't have a downtown club in Terre Haute. The Rotary Club and the Kiwanis Club always have to search for a place to hold a meeting.

WBP: Yes. Well, we have plenty of shelter for a downtown club. We've got an entire hotel that's almost vacant.

BATMAN: Exactly. Yeah.

WBP: To what do you attribute the abandonment of downtown.

BATMAN: The . . . you mean the way it's being abandoned?

WBP: Well, abandoned by the retailing at least.

BATMAN: Well.

WBP: The abandonment and demolition, too.

BATMAN: Yes. Well, of course, it must be more pleasant to shop at the big shopping center like Honey Creek than it is downtown. It appears to me, and I'm not a big shopper at all, but when you go down to Honey Creek on a Sunday afternoon and walk into that mall, /an/ air-conditioned place, every kind of store you can think of, I suppose, is in there -- motion picture houses -- cinema -- jewelry shops, ice cream stand, everything. And it appears to be that there is the social center like the corner grocery store and the corner drugstore used to be. And I guess people like it. And the downtown is unable to offer, so far, that kind of attraction. You park your car for free and if you can find it when you come back out, (laughs) you can get in it and drive on . . . drive away without any traffic lights and stop-and-go except just to get out of the place and then you're on your way. And I suppose the public likes that. As you get back to politics, they get what they want.

WBP: Yes.

Do you think that's been good for Terre Haute or bad -- the movement of people . . . the movement of retailing to the south?

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BATMAN: So far, it must be bad for the downtown. I don't know if you'd say good . . .

WBP: It's not just bad for downtown in the sense that Honey Creek Square is still outside the city limits.

BATMAN: Yes. Yes.

WBP: It's bad for the city in that sense.

BATMAN: Yes, because . . . and when you look at those vacant lots in the downtown area, I think we immediately think, well, what's that going to do to the tax rate on the lots on which there are buildings standing? It takes so much money to run the city. You have to have the lights; you have to have the city police; and you have to have the fire department there to protect the taxpayers. And I think we've got a rough time coming up from the standpoint of taxes in the city. And, of course, the only answer as far as I could see is these places will have to come in.

WBP: We need another Mayor McMillan?

BATMAN: Pardon.

WBP: Maybe Pete Chalos could accomplish that.

BATMAN: Well, that may be . . . it may be his task because, obviously, the downtown doesn't have many taxable (laughs) properties left.

WBP: Yes.

What would you like to see happen in the downtown?

BATMAN: Well, I suppose everyone would like to see the downtown modernized, rejuvenated in this grandiose scheme that you see on paper and on architects' drawings. If that could be put into effect, I think it would be wonderful.

WBP: The downtown mall?

BATMAN: Yes. But the enormous . . . the millions and millions of dollars that would take, where's that going to come from? Surely, we can't lay that all onto the taxpayer, and I don't know where else you'd get it.

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BATMAN: And so-called federal government, that's still the taxpayers. And if they're going to rejuvenate Terre Haute, how about Kokomo and Logansport and Gary and countless other cities all over the land?

WBP: Yes. It would have to be a profit-making venture apparently for the company that's in there now to do it.

BATMAN: I'd certainly think so.

WBP: It means they'd have to be able to project profits from it which would result, then, in them being able to borrow private money or money from financial institutions.

BATMAN: Sure. And we all know what the cost of money is today and The Indianapolis experiment is an interesting thing. They are going gung ho up there with the idea that they're going to make the downtown go. And it's going to be interesting to see if they can.

WBP: They've got a lot of construction going on.

BATMAN: Oh! Tremendous.

WBP: And they've done that with the Downtown Business Council which runs the credit bureau for the city. They make millions of dollars a year.

BATMAN: Right.

WBP: They pour it all right back into the downtown.

BATMAN: Pouring it right back in.

WBP: We haven't had anything like that, have we?

BATMAN: No. Of course, there again as you pointed out, Indianapolis is the state capital. It is the county seat. It is the largest city in the state. They have things going for them including the Eli Lilly Foundation which we do not, unfortunately, have.

WBP: The only possible counterpart to that is the Hulman interests, isn't it? Hulman's interest.

BATMAN: I think so.

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WBP: And they have done a lot as you have mentioned.

BATMAN: They have done a lot. How much more they can do? Of course, those are questions that only time can answer.

WBP: Yeah. The thing that's alarming is the apparent dropping off of population. Now, Hocker /David Hocker and Associates, Inc./ has . . . their studies have shown that the downtown area could support a shopping mall, they think. The community could . . . they could bring in shoppers from all around to there as well as Honey Creek.

BATMAN: Sure.

WBP: And both Honey Creek and the downtown could prosper. That's a good question.

BATMAN: It sure is! It sure is. Surely, it would take a lot of years to prove it out.

WBP: Yes. This would be a high-risk operation.

BATMAN: Very high risk. Lots and lots and lots of money and where could it all come from to try an old experience? That's . . . I don't know.

WBP: Well, probably . . . I don't know. O.K. Well, I suppose it would take participation of the local interests in a major way, and I don't know whether we have that kind of . . .

BATMAN: Well, so many of our industries are "foreign" industries. How much support would you get from Bemis, J.I. Case, Columbia Records, people such as that?

WBP: IMC /International Minerals and Chemicals Corporation/. They all have just . . . they have plants here; that's all.

BATMAN: That's right. And they would probably assess their situation relative to the rest of the industries in Terre Haute, the number of people employed. Some companies apparently have a broader view of their civic responsibility than others. So many questions enter into it.

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WBP: There simply are not very many local headquarters . . . the headquarters of major companies in Terre Haute.

BATMAN: And I say . . . it's amazing to me that there are almost no local stores, as such. All stores are foreign-owned. The Meis Store is a part of the Brown group of companies; it is no longer a home-owned store.

WBP: The same with Root's, isn't it?

BATMAN: And I think the same is true of Root's. And we all know what happened to the restaurant business. There's every kind of restaurant you can think of. Almost none are home-owned restaurants.

WBP: That's right.

BATMAN: Used to be, you'd go down the street and you knew the man who owned it and who ran it, and now you can almost count on the fingers of one hand the local eating places that are home-owned.

WBP: So, in that sense, what we have is absentee landlordism in grand scale, the era of American conglomeration, super corporations.

BATMAN: We're in the age of the franchise and it's a strange picture.

WBP: We've lost control over our own economic destiny in that sense.

BATMAN: Right. We're in the hands of people who no longer live here.

WBP: Those are administrators for large corporations that are owned by stockholders.

BATMAN: Right. Right.

And I expect we'd be amazed if we knew the percentage of ownership of property in the downtown area here that is owned by people who live far, far away from Terre Haute.

WBP: And that's been true for quite a few years, hasn't it?

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BATMAN: Oh, yes!

WBP: Perhaps another one of the reasons for the decline of downtown?

BATMAN: I don't think there's any question about that. There are large blocks of Terre Haute that are owned by people who do not live here. I have heard of one instance of a piece of property downtown that's owned by a family in France. And that, of course, isn't conducive to . . . because those people probably have never been in Terre Haute, Indiana.

WBP: (laughs) Well, at least it's a French name.

BATMAN: Pardon.

WBP: At least Terre Haute is a French name.

BATMAN: Yes, (laughs) that would help some. I never thought of that.

WBP: I asked you what you'd like to see in the downtown. If you were going to try to revitalize the downtown, how would you approach it? What would you do first?

BATMAN: Get some money together or find out where it's coming from. That has to be the first step: where is the money coming from? I talked to several people who are interested in it -- real estate people and others -- and they say, "Who's going to put up the money?" And that's the very first question.

WBP: Are they local people that are asking that question?

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: Well, are they ever going to say . . . do they ever say something like, "I'll put up so much if somebody else will put up so much"?

BATMAN: No, I haven't heard that expressed, because I think they're talking about so much money that if someone came along and said, "I'll give \$200,000," it'd just be a drop in the bucket. It's nothing. I don't think . . . the grandiose scheme that they planned for Terre Haute, I don't think there's anyone in the community able to say, "Well, I'll make a contribution." It would be like asking me. I'd say, "Well, I'll give \$20," you know. (laughs)

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WBP: What we're doing then is, we're basically sitting down and waiting and hoping that one of these large conglomerates will come in and take over downtown.

BATMAN: I suppose that's the whole thing.

WBP: Yeah.

BATMAN: Here comes Wannamaker! (laughs)

WBP: Yeah. (laughs) O.K.

When did you first meet Birch Bayh?

BATMAN: I don't know. I knew Birch . . . I suppose right after the war. I knew . . . I think I first noticed his name when that story came out in the Reader's Digest about him. You know, the story of his work in Germany with the young people in Germany. You're familiar with that, aren't you?

WBP: I don't believe I am.

BATMAN: Well, the Reader's Digest story came out. It caught my eye because it said, "Young man from Terre Haute revitalizes program in Germany," or something.

And this story was that Birch, who was over there and I don't . . . I'm sure he wasn't in the service during the war, but he was in Berlin and some of the big cities where there were ruins. And he induced some people there to get seed to the young people to start a kind of a 4-H type of thing. And he got quite a movement going, as I recall. I must have the article around someplace. He started this movement. And these German kids . . . it grew into quite a thing. They were raising crops and things for gardens. And a lot of buildings were vacant and blown up, and that was I think the first time I read about him.

Then I got acquainted with him when he came back here when he was still in Purdue. And we became friends and that's how it all started, I guess.

WBP: All right. And then were you active? Were you involved in getting him started in politics?

BATMAN: Yes. Yes, I can say that I was.

WBP: What did you do?

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BATMAN: I know that he came in and talked with me about it. And he was a graduate of Purdue and he had this farm he was working. But he was dissatisfied and he didn't like it too well. And he got a job over at Hulman's and he wasn't really too happy with that. And he just had a political bend; there was no question about that. And he said . . . he came in and said he thought he would like to go to law school down at Indiana University. Well, I said, "I think that's a noble idea." And at that time, they had one child.

So, he went down to Indiana University and then one day he was in the office and he'd been around talking to people. He talked to Ralph Tucker and a number of others about running for the legislature. And I told him, as I'm sure many people did -- I wasn't by any means the mentor

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WBP: You said you told Birch Bayh that you thought he ought to run for . . .

BATMAN: Sure. I said, "I think you ought to go to the General Assembly. You'd enjoy it and it's just a good place to go and you can get your feet wet on it." And I mentioned Hugh Dillon -- Judge Dillon. I said, "Judge Dillon was elected while he was in school and Judge Dillon and Matt Welsh and I were all in the same session of the General Assembly." I was Governor Welsh's seat mate. We sat in double seats in those days, like the old school benches you know -- two in a seat. And I said, "Dillon was a very successful legislator while he was still in school. So, I signed his petition, with a lot of other people. And he went down to the courthouse and got acquainted with Lawrence V. "Dutch" Letzkus, the county chairman, and

The first run for a public office is very interesting. You meet so many people. And it was interesting to me that some of the old political wheelhorses, what they would advise you to do. They said, "The primary thing," -- and I told Birch that and I'm sure many other people did -- I said, "you must know every precinct committeeman and his assistant. Make sure you know them on a first-name

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BATMAN: basis. And if they say, 'well, I can't be for you, Birch, I've already committed,' why don't let that bother you. You go right ahead and say 'That's fine, 'you know, 'I'm gonna beat your boy, but . . . you know, whatever. 'After I'm nominated . . . ' And they will say, 'Well, if you're nominated, I'll be in your corner,' but . . . you know. That's the way it is."

Then you'd have people say, "Now, these are the four people in the precinct you must see. But don't you dare tell them I sent you because they don't like me." (laughs) And you'd run into that. You'd make your notes, you know, that . . . for example, Anne Cronin was a real political power. She was one of these Irish women who just loved politics. And she would make you out a list in every precinct, "Now, this one you go to, you tell her, you say, 'I'm Birch Bayh and Anne Cronin told me to see you.' She'll say, 'If you're Anne's boy, you're all right with me.' But you go to this one and don't you tell her you even know me because she'll scalp you, you know." It's that type of thing.

Birch caught on real fast. He was quick. And, of course, he had youth and his very charming manner. And he was an excellent politician. He had many of the traits that Tucker had as a charmer. And he would never get upset with people who weren't for him. And there again, there were a lot of people in this community voted for Birch that didn't share his views to any extent. But they liked him and would vote for him. And he was very successful and at least he served three terms. (laughs) He was in there 18 years, which is a record.

WBP: Well, then he was as successful as any senator in the period since we've begun electing senators.

BATMAN: I did not think he could beat Homer Capehart and I told him so. And he said, "Well, I think I can." And he made believers out of a lot of people.

But there again, it was a combination of youth and his charm and Marvella's personality and the fact that Capehart could have won that campaign if he hadn't just decided it was a shoo-in. And he had forgotten or never learned 'til after he was beaten that today politics is a game of young people. Which is the way it ought to be.

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WBP: Yes.

BATMAN: To my way of thinking. And then the song . . . if there was ever a man elected by a song, (laughs) that was it! You know, the National Association of Advertisers -- or whatever they call that group of people -- named that as the most powerful piece of advertising for the year.

WBP: I didn't know that.

BATMAN: Yeah. Developed by an amateur. Some gal in Kokomo, Indiana, as I recall, dreamed up the words to that music [based on the song "Hey look me over"]. And the advertising . . . the national advertising group awarded that as the most effective bit of advertising of the year.

WBP: Is that right?

BATMAN: Yeah.

WBP: Hmpf.

BATMAN: (laughs) A friend of mine living in Owensboro, Kentucky, said he was talking to some people in Owensboro one day -- two old folks -- and, of course, they were talking politics. And they said, "Well, I tell you there's one man we're going to vote for. That's that man Birch Bayh with that song he's got." (laughs) They didn't know he was running in Indiana.

WBP: Yes.

BATMAN: But it was a powerful piece, you know. And Nancee South told me that when she would play it . . . what was the piece from?

WBP: "Hey, look me over," and I'm not sure . . .

BATMAN: It was from . . . oh, a well-known musical. /From the musical -- a Broadway hit -- "The Wild Cat" was the tune from which Birch got his "Hey look me over" election song./ And it was widely played as a real catchy little tune. And she said that she learned when she would play that, that people all over the place would get up and look around /because/ they thought that Birch had walked in the room.

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WBP: Yes. It has the same kind of appeal as the song that they always play when the new nominee walks into the convention hall.

BATMAN: "Happy days are here again"?

WBP: "Happy days," yeah, it has the same kind of a feeling.

BATMAN: It's that type of thing. And it had the same swing that "Sidewalks of New York" had in the Al Smith campaign. And he was just . . . he lucked into it.

WBP: Yes.

BATMAN: Of course, Birch was always lucky. And there has to be a certain . . . well, there's a . . . I guess it isn't luck as much as being there at the right time at the right place.

WBP: Throughout the 18 years that Birch was in the Senate, did you remain in contact with him? Did you correspond?

BATMAN: Yes. Yes. Birch always kept in close touch with people who had known him. Of course, there's a . . . people just seemed to think -- at least in his first campaign and the second campaign -- that he was just a political phenomenon.

Of course, there's a story about . . . he was a Golden Gloves champion, you know. And while he was at Purdue, he had a very sensational fight the last time he appeared in the ring. It was a . . . do you know the story?

WBP: No.

BATMAN: Well, he was . . . the story was that he was in the finals and the man who was his opponent was obviously a bigger, stronger and a much better fighter. And Birch's coach said, "Now, this is the end of the road, and I'm going to tell you don't try to box with this fellow because you'll get hurt. Now, you can stay with him if you'll stay in close and hold on for three rounds. That's all you gotta go, but don't get back where he can lay one on you because he'll put you away. He's bigger. His reach is longer. He's got you outweighed, and there's just no way you're big enough to whip him."

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BATMAN: So, Birch said, "That's what I will do." And so, the first round I guess they booed pretty badly because it wasn't any fight. Birch just stayed in close and everybody held everybody's arm. (laughs)

In the second round, he got a little venturesome. And near the end of the second round Birch stepped back and leveled off and hit this fellow a pretty good blow and started to come with the second one. But by that time it was too late. This fellow leveled one on Birch and just stretched him out cold as a rock right on the floor.

And the referee gave one look and reached back for a towel, and Birch motioned him away. And he tried to get up but the bell rang, and he was saved by the bell.

WBP: Oh!

BATMAN: So, they brought him over to the corner and his coach said, "Don't you dare go back in to that last round." Birch said, "I found out what happened." And he said, "I'll hold on to the round (laughs) but," he said, "let me finish it." He said, "I know when I'm licked but," he said, "I want to finish the fight." The coach said, "Well, now don't dare take any chances."

So, the fight started and everything went pretty well and Birch was holding on, and there was no fight to it. And near the end of the round this other fellow got desperate and he pulled away a time or two. And he just got . . . let Birch have one shot and he got one through to him and just (commences to chuckle) knocked him colder than a wedge. Just a lucky blow and the guy couldn't get up at the count.

WBP: Amazing.

BATMAN: And so people told Birch, "Well, you're just instinctively lucky." They said, "You couldn't whip that guy in a thousand fights." But he left an opening and he got one through. Otherwise, he would never have been a Golden Gloves champion.

WBP: But that's the way his . . . it characterizes his career.

BATMAN: It just seemed like he was always lucky. And of course, a lot of people thought it was luck that

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BATMAN: would make him a real national figure when he was flying with the Kennedys, and he survived the crash and helped pull the people out of the wreckage. But Birch was a big, strong boy.

WBP: Yes.

BATMAN: And I think he brought a lot of color to the state. I was sorry when I . . . I think his political viewpoint shifted so that he was out of step with Indiana in his last term. Of course, I think it was very difficult for any Democrat to . . . there's been a change. I think I . . . I'm sure I could see it coming, and I think a lot of people saw it coming. There was a conservative wave sweeping the state -- sweeping all of the states. I mean that was clearly demonstrated by George McGovern's defeat in 1972 and it was demonstrated more dramatically by Jimmie Carter's defeat in 1980. Of course, I think Carter, as it turned out, I think he was a very dedicated man and meant well, but I think he was completely inept as a President because he didn't have any experience for the job.

Every President that you and I can remember -- that I can remember -- starting with Roosevelt had broad political backgrounds. Every candidate had broad . . . with the possible exception of Eisenhower who had no political experience but he knew everybody in the world on a . . .

WBP: That's right.

BATMAN: . . . if you can be on a first-name basis with those people. He knew them. And he'd wangled money out of the Congress all of his life for the Army. So he knew his way around in circles. And I'm sure Carter was astonished when he got to Washington to (laughs) see what it looked like.

WBP: That's right.

BATMAN: And I'm afraid he'll go down as an ineffective President which he was. When you stop to think that a Democratic House and a Democratic Senate overrode his veto and that Reagan went in with a Republican Senate, barely, and a Democratic House and controls it.

WBP: Yes.

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BATMAN: Now, that is a test of leadership, isn't it?

WBP: That's right. You bet it is!

BATMAN: It's a test of leadership.

WBP: I want to stop here for a minute.

First, was former Terre Haute mayor Donn
Roberts' apartment at 5th and Wabash or 4th and Wabash?
If it's where the Baskin-Robbins ice cream store
is, it was at 5th and Wabash.

BATMAN: I'll have to check that.

WBP: O.K. There was a conflict there. It was
where . . . according to the interview, it was where
Baskin-Robbins is.

BATMAN: That's right.

WBP: But I think you said 4th and Wabash. And you
may be right. It may have been at 4th and Wabash.

BATMAN: I don't have a copy of that interview. If you
could . . . if you get me the copy, I'll run off a
copy and check some of those things that I think may
be . . .

WBP: O.K.

Well, another thing is why was . . . apparently
Roberts was acquitted in the local circuit court,
right? He was acquitted of any wrongdoing but the
federal . . .

BATMAN: Yes, that's true.

WBP: . . . the U.S. attorney came in.

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: And apparently there were some new laws on the
books.

BATMAN: Yes. And there were . . . there was a difference
in the indictment. He wasn't tried twice for the
same thing. There was a difference in the indictment.

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WBP: But it was unclear what the new indictment was . . . what the old and the new indictments were. I didn't know whether the research just hadn't been done yet or . . .

BATMAN: I don't think we researched that. But it involved . . . one involved a federal charge, the other involved the state.

WBP: I see.

Is it your feeling . . . in your judgment, was Roberts unfairly treated?

BATMAN: Oh, no. I don't think so. I think they had the goods on him in more ways than one. No, I think there wasn't any question about violations.

WBP: O.K. Is it your feeling that he did things that other politicians had not done?

BATMAN: Oh, probably not. Maybe to a greater degree. Like most politicians, they go too far. A lot of people say, "Oh, well, President Nixon only did what all the Presidents have done; he just got caught." I hesitate to think that that's a correct statement. I'm sure there've been indiscretions and perhaps technical and actual violations of the law. But this business of Roberts copying the names off of tombstones and not even bothering to pick 'em at random but just going down the (commences to laugh) row

WBP: Roberts was clearly fixing that election. He was engaged . . .

BATMAN: Oh, yes!

WBP: . . . in wrongdoing.

BATMAN: No question about it.

WBP: And everybody knew . . . O.K.

And so it was not simply an opponent calling in the feds to get him out of there . . .

BATMAN: No.

WBP: . . . or because he had violated the ethics of the "machine"?

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BATMAN: No, no. They stole ballot boxes and it was
flagrant. I don't suppose anyone in . . . oh, I
can't say of anyplace in the state, but certainly it
was the most flagrant thing in Terre Haute ever
done up 'til that time -- or since.

WBP: O.K. That's another problem with our image,
I guess, maybe. (laughs) People remembered that.

BATMAN: Oh, that, of course . . . /Brought/ national
publicity of the wildest sort and then the behavior
of the public in cheering the (commences to laugh)
convicted off. Of course, in Boston they elected a
man governor, wasn't it, while he was still in the
penitentiary so . . .

WBP: That's right.

BATMAN: . . . maybe we're not too different after all.

WBP: No. No.

I don't know. I guess that Terre Hauteans,
you know, have had a tendency just to kind of sit back
and wink and kind of laugh it off. I mean they've
tolerated lots of things that other communities,
more straitlaced perhaps, wouldn't have tolerated.
And to some extent that's makes us a more -- I don't
know what -- tolerant society.

BATMAN: I suppose you might say that. Of course, /Richard/
Daley -- you can't compare Terre Haute and Chicago --
now Daley was a man who had broad support in the
financial community. And in Chicago I understand
that the biggest and most prosperous businessmen in
Chicago backed Daley because they knew how he would
run the city and they liked it run that way.

(laughs) I'll never forget the interview that
these enterprising Tribune reporters had when they
found that he not only had perhaps arranged for his
sons to get /an/ insurance permit under questionable
sources and then giving them all the business, he
said, "Well, what father can you think of that wouldn't
help his kids make a living?" (chuckles) He put 'er
right on the line.

WBP: That's right.

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BATMAN: That ended the discussion, you know.

WBP: Yes.

BATMAN: So, I suppose in many respects we aren't different from other communities, and yet you can always find differences if you look far enough.

WBP: Let's talk about the Ku Klux Klan.

During what year was the Klan the strongest in Terre Haute?

BATMAN: In the '20s.

WBP: Throughout the decade?

BATMAN: Yes. Now, of course, I wasn't here at that time. And I was pretty young and didn't know really what was going on. But from what I have read and studied and with people with whom you can still talk, the Klan had a real tight grip, not only on Terre Haute, but in Indiana. That was when D.C. Stephenson . . . the law books are full of the story of his escapades and the state was in the grip of a virtual dictatorship and . . .

WBP: Although not for the entire decade?

BATMAN: Pardon.

WBP: Not for the entire decade though, right?

BATMAN: No, no. It was only a few years when that went on and it flew apart. But I think there were two or three elections in Terre Haute and in Vigo County in which not a single Democrat was elected. It was a complete . . . the Klan took over the Republican party for a few years in there and they were . . .

WBP: And that's not just a Democratic charge? There's ample evidence that that's true?

BATMAN: Oh, yes! Yes. You could tell by the vote that there were . . . just no . . . you were a Klansman or you didn't get elected.

WBP: I see. But the officeholders were known Klansmen then?

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BATMAN: Oh, I think so, yes. There was a period when some people bragged about it.

WBP: Yes. Well, the Klan . . . in many days for many people the Klan was the way you could let people know you were a hundred per cent American.

BATMAN: That seemed to be it . . . which was the most unAmerican organization you can imagine. I know David Rosenfeld who was a practicing attorney here shortly after the Klan, told me -- of course, he was a Jewish boy and very fine man, an excellent lawyer -- that he had difficulty in being retained or employed by any of the Jewish merchants because they were afraid to retain anyone except one with known Klan associations.

WBP: My goodness!

BATMAN: And he said for a fact that the clients that he had in his early days of practice when the Klan influence was still around were gentile people who were friendly to him and felt sorry that he wasn't able to make any progress because his own people didn't hire him and for a reason. They couldn't win a lawsuit if they had him. (laughs)

WBP: My goodness.

BATMAN: And at that time he had to . . . his practice was limited to outside of the courtroom.

WBP: Ha!

BATMAN: And he was an excellent trial lawyer, a good lawyer. But that must have been a very, very interesting era in Terre Haute, and some of the stories that you can get that are true would almost frighten you to think it can happen in this country.

WBP: Do you have any sense of why there seemed to have been such a movement to demonstrate your Americanness?

BATMAN: Well, of course, it was the temper that the country was in at the time. We had come out of World War I. And there was a wave of so-called prosperity of the flamboyant times of the '20s. Then they mounted this campaign that the Jews, the black people, and the Catholics were all anti-American. Obviously, the Catholics were because the pope was the head of the church and he was a foreigner. And the black

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BATMAN: people were moving into positions of some prominence and had to be put down. And it made an excellent vehicle for propaganda people, and it was a frightening period in this country's history.

There was a book written by a man named Lewis /Frederick Lewis Allen/ called Only Yesterday. Have you read it?

WBP: Yes.

BATMAN: It's scary, isn't it?

WBP: Yes.

BATMAN: And you can understand from reading that it can happen here the same as it did under Hitler in Germany. We're no different from . . . we're all alike.

WBP: Um hm.

BATMAN: And how they could persuade people that they were 100% American when it was against everything that this country is for. It had to be a masterpiece of real salesmanship of the worst kind.

WBP: Yes.

In your experience, is Terre Haute notably racist or anti-Semitic?

BATMAN: I don't think so. I don't . . . of course, we don't . . . the number of Jewish people in this community is amazingly low. We just . . . why I guess there're less than a hundred families who are Jewish families.

WBP: Some of them are rather well-to-do I guess.

BATMAN: Sure, I'm sure a great many of . . . well, Mr. Blumberg certainly was a wealthy man. And he was highly respected. And A. N. Levin, who was head of Levin Brothers, told me an interesting story that you might just find fascinating.

He was one of the finest public speakers we had in the community, and he was a great philosopher and a brilliant businessman. I don't know whether he was a wealthy man or not. But he was a very intellectual

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BATMAN: person, philosophical in his thinking. And I heard him speak one time in which he said that it was in his opinion impossible to find any organization in which intelligent men belonged that was not . . . didn't have some good philosophical point that you could find, some good in everything was about the basis. So, afterward I said, "Mr. Levin, you were here during the days of the Klan. Can you name one redeeming feature in that organization?" And he was the head of Levin Brothers that operated a kind of a . . . it was a wholesale business but you could go in and buy at retail. He studied a little bit, and he said, "Well, they bought all their sheets at Levin Brothers."

WBP: (laughs heartily)

BATMAN: (laughs) He had to look a little bit far to see, but he found it.

But he . . . it's very difficult today to understand that that sort of thing existed. And I think maybe one of the reasons for Vern McMillan's popularity was that he resisted all efforts of the Klan to . . . for him to join. And he stood by his Catholic and Jewish friends and they knew it. And when he ran for public office, they came out of the woodwork.

WBP: Yes.

BATMAN: And there were a few citizens like that in Terre Haute whose business was almost ruined by the fact that they would not join the Klan.

WBP: Amazing.

BATMAN: It was a very rough time.

WBP: Do you know who the chief financiers of the Klan were?

BATMAN: In this community? No, I have no idea.

WBP: I don't either.

BATMAN: There were some ministers . . . there was one minister (fortunately I have forgotten his name). But he was quite a spellbinding preacher here who was one of the leading orators speaking out for

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BATMAN: the Klan at the time. And he had a wide following.
People like that are dangerous.

WBP: Yes.

BATMAN: I think maybe we see some of it now in the television evangelists that are showing up with their own pet political philosophies. I don't know that . . . I sometimes look with some degree (commences to laugh) of suspicion on the philosophy that they express from the pulpit.

WBP: You bet. I agree.

You mentioned when we were talking about Birch Bayh that the people of Terre Haute many times didn't always agree with his philosophy but that they voted for him anyway.

BATMAN: Well, I think some people had civic loyalty. I've heard people say, well, I'm Republican but Birch is in the Senate and it's the first time we've had anybody in the Senate, and you know. I think a certain number of votes was that way. And then I think a lot of people liked to be identified with a United States Senator. They liked to have him for dinner, even if they don't agree with him and maybe don't even vote for him. But I suppose we're all hero worshippers after a sort. People like to entertain Larry Bird when he's back here. And they like to be seen around people. And many of us are name-droppers. And I know Birch was entertained at dinner in homes here where they utterly, completely, and totally disagreed with his philosophy, but it was nice to have the senator in for dinner. And that sort of thing prevails and . . .

WBP: Would you say that the most active . . . the politically most active people -- either financially or active -- in Terre Haute generally supported Birch Bayh or . . .

BATMAN: Certainly they did in his first run for public office and to . . . but gradually, his support went down. I was astonished to see the election result in this last campaign in this county that John Myers -- a Republican and a "foreigner" so to speak, not

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BATMAN: being a native of the county -- won by an overwhelming plurality; and Birch barely carried the county, which showed very sharp decline in his popularity.

WBP: Yeah. That goes along with what you said about the shift in the mood of the nation.

BATMAN: Oh, yes.

WBP: And, of course, Birch benefitted from the shift the other way in 1962.

BATMAN: Right. Right.

WBP: That was an interesting thing. His luck had run out in that sense.

BATMAN: That's right.

WBP: But I guess what I'm trying to get at is, would you say that Terre Haute . . . you say that they supported him the first time. Did Terre Haute consider Birch to be one of their sons?

BATMAN: Oh, I think so as soon as he was elected. (laughs)

WBP: But you say then that support dwindled though.

BATMAN: Yes. I think the results at the polls showed that he steadily lost ground, which isn't unusual.

WBP: Why is that though?

BATMAN: Well, I think he was elected as the all-American boy, and no one really cared what his political philosophy was, if they knew. /They felt/ here was one of our boys from a local high school and Purdue University man, Indiana University man. He was on (laughs) both sides. And he had a charming and delightful wife, and I don't think Marvella's influence could ever be discounted. Birch used to say she was sharper in politics than he was, and she may have been. And he attracted a lot of people. I'm sure there were a lot of prominent, well-heeled Republicans who contributed to his campaign. Homer /Capehart/ was going downhill.

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BATMAN: He was old. (chuckles) I'll never forget one Republican called me up . . . you remember perhaps in the closing days of the campaign, someone wrote a song for Homer, which was a silly-sounding song. And then they showed him waling out in the cornfield in his shirtsleeves, shucking corn and throwing 'em to the pigs. And a very prominent Republican here in this community -- he was a generous contributor to the Republican cause -- called me. He said, "Have you been watching television?" He said, "Did you see Homer on the screen?" I said, "Yes." He said, "He's beat. He's beat." He said, "You can't tell the senator from a pig." (laughs)

WBP: Yes. (laughs)

BATMAN: (continuing to laugh) He said, "That's the stupidest commercial I ever saw," which it turned out to be.

WBP: Of course, I have heard that . . . same story, yeah.

BATMAN: So, there were a lot of things that . . .

WBP: Yeah, but what I'm trying to get at, I guess, is, did Birch Bayh . . . was he more liberal than the average Terre Haute /citizen/?

BATMAN: Yes. Yes. I think that Birch's liberalism became too much, certainly for his Republican backers and for a great many of the Democratic backers. You know, I think we've seen a real shift. I hear people . . . well, I mean a truck driver who will say, "Aw, these taxes." And he says, "Here I am. I made \$23,000 last year and look how much . . . what's the taxes I'm paying?" Well, all of a sudden the people who had been \$6500 people and \$11,000 people were owning stock in Standard Oil of Indiana. And they were real happy as they saw their (laughs) dividends come in and increase. And I think that the wave of what-do-you-call it, prosperity -- at least higher incomes /among/ particularly . . . like people who ran beauty shops -- girls who'd run those -- and who were in rather minor-league occupations suddenly found they were paying high social security taxes and other taxes. And they were beginning to listen to people like Ronald Reagan.

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WBP: O.K. That's what people said about the Eisenhower years. Eisenhower was elected in part because of the rising middle class, the growth of the middle-class.

BATMAN: Right. I think that's right.

WBP: People had come out of the Depression now. The government programs had gotten the economy going again. Once the economy got going, then people started having higher incomes, moved into the suburbs, and instead of voting Democrat like they used to when they lived in inner city . . .

BATMAN: Right!

WBP: . . . they began voting Republican.

BATMAN: That's right.

WBP: The same thing is true.

BATMAN: And I think . . . I've always thought that people will vote their pocketbooks. I mean that if the Democrats came in under Roosevelt, well, people were desperate for a change and he promised the change. Well, Reagan promised a change and some people were getting pretty desperate about it. And here's the man on the white horse!

WBP: I guess another thing that I'm trying to get at is the nature of Terre Haute party politics, the ideology here. Was it basically a conservative brand of Democratic thinking?

BATMAN: Right!

WBP: Was it always?

BATMAN: No.

WBP: Well, there was . . . what was most important in Terre Haute? Ideology? Or party loyalty?

BATMAN: (long pause) That's a hard one to answer. I don't know that I could . . . of course, it . . .

WBP. Now, Henry Schricker, for instance, was a man who was a conservative who was able to get votes from Republicans and Democrats, but he appealed to to Indiana Democrats because he was conservative economically.

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BATMAN: I don't think you can elect . . . well, Henry Schricker was a delightful person. He was the son of an immigrant. He was a homespun type, a small country banker. And he was a philosopher. He was basically conservative, and I don't think we've ever elected a Democratic governor in my time who wasn't fundamentally conservative.

WBP: All right.

BATMAN: Indiana is a conservative state.

WBP: And that includes Terre Haute.

BATMAN: And that includes Terre Haute. And . . .

WBP: So, the Democratic party in Terre Haute was not a party that supported Debs by any means.

BATMAN: No. I don't think so. The Democratic party . . . some of the leadership of the Democratic party, particularly in the background, were pretty well-heeled people.

WBP: Such as?

BATMAN: Well, the Kellys, for example -- the Kelly family. John Kelly, who was one of my advisers when I was new in politics, is a conservative man. I think he's a man of some means. I have no idea about his wealth. It's none of my business and I wouldn't know.

WBP: What was his occupation?

BATMAN: Well, he was in the bituminous materials business.

WBP: I see.

BATMAN: He had a number of business interests in Indiana and outside of Indiana. And he was a well-liked man. And people of his caliber helped control the destinies of the Democratic party in the days when county chairmen were very important. And the Kelly family is a very prominent, well-known, well-liked family in the community. Influence like that in the Democratic party is traditionally conservative. And I know they would back Birch to an extent; now where they were in the last campaign I don't know. They aren't prominent in politics any more. But a lot of people who have . . . as you say, the rising middle

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BATMAN: class cling to the Democratic party as a label, but they sometimes don't vote that way.

WBP: The Hulmans were Democratic, were they not?

BATMAN: That's a good question. Someone checked into Tony's record in voting in the primary, and he had . . . he didn't vote in the primaries very often. He had voted both ways -- sometimes asking for Democratic ballot, sometime for a Republican ballot. I don't suppose you could really pin a label on him because he was never identified actively in politics. Everyone knows, of course, that he was helpful to Birch. He liked Birch and I'm sure that he supported him.

WBP: When you say liked him, he liked him personally?

BATMAN: Liked him personally and I'm sure he supported him at election time. Now, whether he was still in his corner in . . . of course, he didn't live to his last campaign, but before that, I would imagine he supported him. He was very low key in expressing his political preferences. I don't ever remember seeing him at a party rally of either party. He perhaps contributed to both like a lot of businessmen do here and everyplace else. It's kind of a common thing. Be on . . . you know, bet on both horses; one of 'em is going to win. (laughs)

WBP: That's right.

Well, I guess it's . . . finally maybe the question is, did Birch do as much for Terre Haute as he could have or should have? Did he do anything for Terre Haute that one can think of?

BATMAN: Well, you hear a lot of people say, what did he do for Terre Haute? I don't . . .

WBP: Maybe Terre Haute didn't deserve anything, but I . . .

BATMAN: Maybe that's it. I don't know. What can a senator do for a community?

WBP: He didn't get . . . apparently we didn't get the number of off ramps from I-70 that we might . . .

BATMAN: No.

WBP: He may have tried but we didn't want them. I don't know.

HOWARD BATMAN
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BATMAN: He may have tried and wasn't successful. Let's see. I don't know . . . did Birch ever serve under a Democratic president?

WBP: LBJ [Lyndon B. Johnson].

BATMAN: LBJ, yes, I guess that was it.

WBP: Also, of course, John F. Kennedy.

BATMAN: Yeah, Kennedy and Johnson.

WBP: And Johnson and . . . let's see. Carter, was he . . . no, he was defeated with Carter.

BATMAN: Yeah. So Kennedy and Johnson administrations were the only ones; and, of course, he was high in the council with Johnson at the beginning, but I don't think it was that way at the finish. He and Johnson had some violent differences at the last. And I don't think you could point out anything that Birch . . . that you could say he did this for Terre Haute. I don't know that you could point out anything he did for Indiana. After all, a senator's influence is somewhat limited. There're so many things they can't do. They get a lot of credit for doing things.

I think this last big move . . . this vast amount of money for rehabilitation in Terre Haute was largely a part of Birch's work, but I don't think the money's showed up yet. (laughs)

WBP: (laughs) O.K.

Well, I think this has been an excellent interview. I appreciate your spending this much time with me and . . .

BATMAN: Well, I was interested in going back over some of these things. I could have done a better job if I'd done some research on it.

WBP: Are there some things that you . . . the name Joe Quinn has come up. He was active in the Hulman . . .

BATMAN: Yes.

WBP: . . . company. He helped Tony quite a bit, didn't he?

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BATMAN: Yes, he was. Joe was . . .

WBP: Did you know him?

BATMAN: Oh, yes. I think everybody knew Joe. Joe was very active, a good public relations man. He was a hard worker. Joe was a Republican but he was a good friend of Birch. Most of his activities concerned the Speedway and Hulman operations.

WBP: Tony seemed to have the ability to surround himself with excellent people and to elicit . . . to gain their loyalty.

BATMAN: He had a lot of real loyal friends. There's no question about that. People liked to be around Tony. He was interesting to be around and he was just a fun person to work with. He did a lot of things for a lot of people that never came into public light. I know lots of young men that he helped through college without any fanfare about it and things like that.

WBP: He seemed . . .

BATMAN: He . . .

WBP: Go ahead.

BATMAN: He was generous. A lot of people didn't think he was generous enough, but I'm sure that's a common fault that we find with rich people, "Well, why didn't they do more, you know?"

WBP: Was he a little bit concerned about that criticism? Was he . . . did it bother him?

BATMAN: He was sensitive about it and I think it's understandable if you've done a great deal for a community or anything. Most people I think appreciated it. After all, a rich man doesn't have to do anything if he doesn't want to -- pay taxes and go on about his business. And I'm sure there are people in this community who have done just that. But Tony, he would assist in hospital drives and Community Chests and things like that and he would set an example. But no matter . . . I suppose if a rich man gave away all the money he had, they'd still say he should have done more. But I believe

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BATMAN: most fair-minded individuals, if they will look around and see things that he has done or inquire to find out, they will find out that the family from the start . . . St. Benedict's church, I'm sure that the great part of the original contributions came from the Hulman family. The church is designed exactly along the lines of the church that his family belonged to in Germany. It used to have a big glass dome at the top until the fire occurred. And with that change, the architectural design -- the outside of the church and the interior -- I'm told, is an exact duplicate of the plans [that] were brought from Germany. It was sort of a memorial to his family. And when you look at those things . . . of course, the original St. Anthony hospital had the Hulman memorial arch over it. They contributed . . . I don't know whether they contributed all, but they contributed very substantially to St. Anthony's Hospital. And then, oh, a drive that was conducted in the last 15 or 20 years -- Tony was chairman of the joint committee between Union and St. Anthony's to raise funds for further development. And he took the lead in raising the money and contributing the money. So, they've done a lot of things. The Hulman contribution of the golf course out here. I don't know how much that cost but, of course, it cost a fabulous amount of money. It's one of the finest courses, I guess, in the Middle West.

WBP: The Hulman links, you're talking about?

BATMAN: Yes.

And I don't know whether we would have had a Hulman Center or not if he hadn't taken the lead in putting together money on that. So, the community owes a lot to him and a lot of other people who've . . . you know, as we mentioned before -- Mr. Rea and those people who . . . none of us or certainly I don't know anything about at all, but they left at least a monument to their name which I think is thoroughly proper. I don't suppose there's one person in fifty [who] could tell you who Mr. Rea was or what he did.

END OF TAPE 2

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